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The Cruise of the "Wanderoo" on Friday Nights at Sea

CORDON STABLES, C.M. M.D.
Surgeon Royal Navy.

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THE

CRUISE OF "THE WANDEROO,"

OR

FRIDAY NIGHTS AT SEA.

BY

GORDON STABLES, C.M., M.D.

(*SURGEON ROYAL NAVY*),

AUTHOR OF "THE CRUISE OF THE SNOWBIRD," "FROM POLE TO POLE,"
"O'ER MANY LANDS, ON MANY SEAS," "STANLEY GRAHAM,
A TALE OF THE DARK CONTINENT," ETC.

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DEDICATION.

To F. W. ROBINSON, Esq.

(NOVELIST, ETC., ETC.)

TRUE, my good friend Fred, the annual hamper—huge in dimensions, and filled with moorcock, hare, and grouse—did not reach your residence this year from my Highland home at Dalboorie. Circumstances beyond the pale of my control combined to prevent my wandering through the blooming heather on the glorious 12th; and any game my ghillie had slain would not—I feel certain—have possessed, in your estimation, so high a value as those which flutter groundward to my unerring gun.

But believe me, friend, my disappointment was quite as poignant as your own. For a time I was inconsolable, till I bethought me of a pathway to lead me out and away from the labyrinth of my sorrows.

“*Habeo! Habebit!*” I cried at the breakfast-table one morning. I likewise shouted “Eureka! I will dedicate to F. W. ROBINSON my new book of instructive and moral yarns.”

“Will he care for it?” queried my wife, tentatively.

“Care for it, my dear!” I ejaculated. “Why, I’ve often heard Fred say that, next to the man who sends him a hamper of game, he reveres the thoughtful soul who posts him a joke.”

Dedication.

So now, my friend, the thing is done. The little modest volume is written, printed, published. Would, however, it were better done! Would, for your sake, every page of it were fringed with smiles; that my wit could scintillate like that of a Jerrold; that my pen could coruscate like the lightning-tipped tongue of a Sheridan. It mought not be! Still, I have comfort in remembering that you are about the last man in the world to "look a gift horse in the mouth."

"A book of nonsense yarns!" you'll say, when you read them. Right. But nonsense makes one laugh, and to laugh is to live. They say that at forty a man must either be a fool or a physician. Can you conceive of a man being both? A man seated, pen in hand, arrayed in the crimson-hooded toga of the M.D., surmounted by cap and bells? While spinning these moral yarns, so sat I.

Says Burns:—

"Some books are lies frae end to end,
In some, big lies are never penned."

My present "bookie" belongs to the latter class, and you will be struck with the air of truthfulness that pervades every page. It is, in fact, a collection of facts; not ordinary facts, mind you, but true facts. And if all the yarns are not equally instructive and impressive —what then? Why, as our Scotch surgeon used to say, when ladling out the soup—"Ye maun tak' the thick wi' the thin."

Good-bye, Fred.

Your friend,

THE AUTHOR.

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THE CRUISE OF THE "WANDEROO;" OR, FRIDAY NIGHTS AT SEA.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANCHOR'S WEIGHED.

"**I**F there be any happiness to be found at sea, I believe I am bound to have a taste of it this time." That is what I said to myself as I stood leaning over the bulwarks, and gazing shorewards, on the morning after the day on which I had joined the Wanderoo. I had no very special object in gazing shorewards. I wasn't married then, and had, therefore, no weeping wife to leave behind me ; and I wasn't in love, at least not much more than sailors usually are. To be sure, there was bewitching Barbara B., and saucy-eyed Adeline C., and the dear girls I was wont to waltz with at the nightly hop, and poor Carry L., the gentle wee actress who said —but there, never mind what she said ; hadn't I got to sail in three days' time ? and wouldn't they all forget me in three weeks at furthest ? Of course they would. So I gazed shoreward simply from habit. I was born on shore ; and besides, it was a lovely morning. We were lying inside the Plymouth breakwater. The water between us and the shore was all a-ripple with a westerly breeze, and all a-sparkle with the May sunshine. Boats were passing to and fro, and, quite regardless of their

presence, big shells were being hurtled over them at the target beyond. There would be just one puff of white smoke from the wall of the fort on the right, then the roar of the gun, then the dull thud near the target, if a shell; or if a shot, you could mark its further progress by the flecks of foam it raised as it went ricochetting away and away and away, till it sank at last in the depths of the sea.

In yonder, slightly to the left, is a stone fort, bristling with guns. It hugs the foreshore, crouching in under the green hills, like a tiger about to spring on its prey. Pity the enemy's ship those deadly guns are ever brought to bear upon. Beyond are the bonny wooded braes of Mount Edgecumbe ; but all the rough lines of the hills and forts and distant steeples are rounded off and softened by a dreamy haze, partly mist and partly smoke, that the sun will make short work with as soon as he gets over the foreyard.

And what were we, and whither were we bound ?

These questions may be very briefly answered.

We were a little steam yacht, or, rather, a craft of some three hundred tons that we had bought and made a yacht of.

We had a monkey for a figure-head, and we duly and with great ceremony baptised the vessel

" THE WANDEROO."

We were bound for the Arctic regions in search of sport, and probably adventure, our crew, all told, being about forty-five.

Most of our fellows hailed from Hull, Dundee, or Aberdeen, and every man Jack had been in Polar regions before ; we were therefore good icemen.

Aft, we were in our little mess, six souls in all, that is allowing the big Newfoundland dog Nero to have a soul, which I feel sure he had.

There was Harry Smartie, our mate, who had been everywhere and done everything. A tall, dashing Yankee, but a man who, though possessed of a deal of dry humour, did not speak through his nose, as the untravelled Saxon imagines all American men do.

Duncan Douglas, our Scotch engineer, brown-faced, big-bearded, quiet, but jolly in the extreme.

Dr. Dibson, also a right good fellow, who had seen service in the Royal Navy, and was profoundly learned, so that, good though his yarns were, he was apt to prelude them with a kind of introductory lecture.

Our captain, Ben Crisp, and my humble self, of whom the least said the soonest mended.

But the captain was a bit of a character. An old Navy man he was, who had joined the merchant service during the Crimean War.

He confessed to being fifty. That in itself was good proof of his honesty ; for had he said to you, "I'm not a day over forty, lad," and had you looked into that calm, clear eye of his, had you marked the rose tints of health that mantled over cheeks and brow, and winced under the grip of his steel hard hand, you would have returned the pressure of the latter to the best of your ability, and promptly made answer thus, "I believe you, my boy ; I believe you."

Not a tall man was the tar of our tale, Captain Benjamin Crisp, yet he gave you the idea of such, for his was a powerful frame. Talk about limbs ! see Ben's —see the lower masts of an old seventy-four. A chest ? Ben's was tough and hard as the winch you heave the anchor with ; and Ben's biceps—aye, that was a biceps and no mistake about it ; had you felt it, you would at once have said : "Biceps be hanged ! that ain't a biceps ; Ben, my boy, you don't gammon me. It's one of the ship's blocks you've got stowed up your sleeve. There !"

And Ben would have smiled and looked pleased, and probably proceeded forthwith to light his short clay. His smile, indeed, was one of the pleasantest ever you saw. It lit up his whole face, as the sun lights up the morning clouds. You were constrained to smile with him, or even to laugh, for you felt on good terms with yourself at once. There was altogether a breezy manner about Ben, born, one would think, of the fresh free air he had breathed so long ; born of the ozonic ocean itself, for Ben was redolent of the sea. Dressed ? Why, as most

master-mariners dress on shore—broad-cloth coat, broad-cloth everything, and the everlasting upright hat ; but if Ben thought to impose upon anyone by this rig of his, and to pass himself off as a genuine landsman, he was very much mistaken indeed. For in your imagination, wherever you had met him thus encased, you couldn't have helped divesting him on the spot of every stitch he wore. Nay, but avast ! for a moment, we will not have the good Ben stripped to the skin and left to shiver ; for, I say, while with one flash of the imagination you would have deprived him of all his shore-going toggery, with the next you would have topped him with a brave sou'-wester, rigged him out in P.-jacket and C.-boots, and supposed him far away on the broad bosom of the Atlantic, steadily tramping up and down on the weather side of his own well-caulked quarter-deck.

Such was Ben at his best. Such was Ben as I remember meeting him one afternoon on the Paddington platform. He had just returned from the far-off Indies, and looked the quintessence of blooming health and jollity. I had no business even to have asked how he was, and might have expected the answer that came straight at my head like a fifty-six pound shot.

" How am I ? " said bold Ben ; " how am I ? how do I look ? "

Ben had a clear, manly, ringing voice, one that could be heard, aye, and had been heard, high over the raging wind on many a stormy night at sea. But it wasn't an unpleasant voice, nor a grating voice. He did not speak as though his gullet were lined with emery paper and his head in a bucket of water, as some old sailors do. Perhaps the cigars he smoked had something to do with the matter. Ah ! they were rare bits o 'baccy, I can tell ye. Wherever he got them I can't make out, but there they were, as thick as the neck of a quart bottle, as smooth and brown as a horse chestnut or polished cedar, pearly in ash and pleasant in perfume, not a day too old, not a day too new. Let you be ever so cynical or ever so churlish, you couldn't have smoked one of Ben's cigars for half a minute without feeling at peace with the whole

world, and content with your lot; so content, indeed, that were Salisbury to ask you to change places with the Prince of Wales, you could only reply, "Well, I'll think over it, Sal., and let you know."

Ben was a thorough sailor. Alas! there are few like him left.

Well found in every way were we, with a fair allowance of coals, which, however, we determined not to use except when obliged to. We would always sail when wind and weather permitted.

We started on our memorable cruise in the month of March, 187—, and early on a blustering morning. I ran on deck to look at the weather, just pausing a second on the main or fighting deck to glance at a Fitzroy barometer. The mercury was low and concave.

I could hear the wind, before my head was on a level with the quarter-deck. It was blowing up Channel, and blowing big guns too, not to say Woolwich Infants. It was making harp-strings of our wire-rigging, and "howthering" through it with the roar of a cataract after a "spate." It seemed trying to twist our very royal masts; but they refused to yield, although the vessel herself jerked angrily about, and pulled viciously at her moorings, as if longing to be free. There were occasional blinks of sunshine between the squalls, and occasional glimpses of a blue sky; but the clouds were banked along the horizon to windward, like rocks of quartz on top, but black and threatening beneath.

Dark smoke was escaping from the funnel, cut flat oft ere it could rise an inch above it, and rapidly swirled away to leeward.

I knew very well we were going to have a rough day of it, followed, in all probability, by a dirty night. The prospect was not a pleasing one; for sailors like to leave their native land in fine weather, though rolling home is rather agreeable than otherwise.

Two hours later, it was blowing about half a gale of wind—what most landsmen would call a hurricane; but, nevertheless, the *Wanderoo* was steaming seawards past the breakwater, right in the teeth of it. Captain

Ben Crisp was too good a sailor to be daunted by a puff of wind.

The Wanderoo looked as though she meant to behave splendidly. She met the seas half-way, seemed in fact to leap at them, over them, and into them ; the foam went feathering up as high as the funnel, and the white spray fell in bucketfuls on the quarter-deck. Heavy as the seas undoubtedly were that she had to contend with, there was no sensation under our feet as we walked up and down that her way was stopped for a single moment, nor did she shake or shiver like an old clothes-basket, nor ship tons of solid green water as some rubbery tubs would have done under like circumstances. Oh, no, the Wanderoo was a grand tight wee craft ; solid and yet elastic ; proud and defiant, yet answering to a touch ; a veritable little heart-of-oak.

I knew all this two hours after we had passed the breakwater, and felt happy and light-hearted in consequence.

And the men soon knew it also, for having to go forward in the evening, although the night was closing in around us in darkness and storm, I could hear—high over the roaring of the wind and the rushing noise of breaking waves—our good fellows singing as sailors only sing when they are pleased with their ship.

For four days we steamed steadily on, and found ourselves well past the Shetlands by the fifth.

Then came a fair wind, and fires were let down and out.

We had begun our voyage in earnest, and all hands fore and aft seemed already at home.

The long voyage towards the Pole I do not mean to describe. Suffice it to say that, just three weeks after sailing, we found ourselves “beset,” frozen in hard and fast near the northern shores of the wild and rugged isle of Jan Mayen—and it was during a long imprisonment here that the happy thought occurred to us to beguile the monotony of our existence by eating sea-pie, singing sea-songs, and spinning yarns.

CHAPTER II.

SEA-PIE NIGHT—A SONG AND A YARN BY THE GALLEY FIRE.

HERE were choice spirits forward, who of an evening—if evening we dare call it, with the cold sun shining in the blue sky—surrounded the galley fire, and it was no uncommon thing for the doctor, the engineer, or myself to find our way to half-deck or steerage, and listen to the songs and fun and yarns.

Teddy Welcome was one of these, and probably it was he who first suggested to the minds of us officers the idea of beguiling the time by an occasional story or song before turning in.

It was on that same Friday night—sea-pie night—when we had made the ice.

Teddy was in full swing this evening. They had been dancing till tired after supper, and now they were yarning. “Give us a song,” cried Teddy to McFarlane, who held the double capacity of carpenter and ship’s fiddler.

“One of my own, then, if you’ll have it.”

“Hurrah!” cried everybody. And to the fine old air of “The Auld Scotch Sangs,” McFarlane sang as follows :

MY LUNTIN’* PIPE.

My pipe, my pipe, my guid clay pipe,
What though you’re short and black?
Thy soothing fumes can sorrow kill,
And gladness bring me back,
For I am auld, my bluid rins cauld,
My days are wearin’ through,
Nae joy is left me now in life,
My luntin’ pipe, but you.

* Reeking.

But mem'ry, in those clouds o' blue,
 Can former times restore,
 My mither's cot, the rowan tree
 That grew beside the door,
 The heather bloom, the gowden broom
 That blossomed on the lea,
 And wild wood green, and rippling stream,
 Ilk' scene comes back to me.

See yonder stands the wee bit kirk,
 Wi' steeple white and high,
 That points the way, like angel hand,
 To realms beyond the sky ;
 My Mary, though you've left me here,
 Thy sweet face still I see :
 It's painted in the wreathin' smoke,
 My luntin' pipe, by thee.

Dear solace o' my early years
 And life in every stage,
 Thy fragrant breath a halo throws
 Around the brow of age.
 Though fickle fortune on me frown
 Till death has closed my ee,
 The fate I'll bliss that leaves me *this*,
 My luntin' pipe, wi' thee.

"Thank ye, Scottie," said Teddy; "and if there was a drop more in the bottle, it's your health and song I'd be drinking this moment."

"Well," said Mac, "I think it's your turn noo, and the company look towards ye."

"It's sorra the bit av music that is in me, but I'll spin you a bit av a yarn."

"Good. Heave round, Teddy."

For all felt sure the merry wee Irishman had some kind of tale to tell. The men's pipes were all in full blast, and they looked in that stage of dreamy comfort in which one would rather listen to a story than talk.

"Av course," said Teddy, "it is the rale truth I'll be after telling."

"Of course, of course. Heave round, then."

"It was the morsel av dead pig in the fire, sure enough, that put me in mind av it," said Teddy. "It's many a long year now since I sailed on the ould 'Stedfast,' as purty a little craft as ever sail or eye was clapped

upon, and her figure-head was the picture of the captain's wife—bless her soul, for she's dead and gone. We made the countrhy all right and straight, just as we've done to-day. Now, it was just loike my luck, for the devil a hundred seals we came across all the saison, and I dipinding on the vhoyage to marry the swatest girl in all Oirland.

“ ‘Bad cess to it,’ says I to meself, one day; ‘sure if we can’t get seals we’ll have a bear or two.’ So I sets about collecting all the ham-bones I could find, and one night I sets ’em a-frizzling in the galley fire. It was frozen in we were at the time; and och! the delicate perfume that went up the vent, and out av the chimley, and spread itself all over the ice! Sure the bears could scent it fifty miles away, as aisy as sinning; and it’s devil a bit av a lie I’m tellin’ ye, for next morning, sure enough, there they were, and not far off aither, mor’n a score on ’em, some a-sniffing av the air and shaking their heads, and some sitting on one end, like dacint Christians, rubbing their noses wid their paws. And thin, me bhoys, it was rare sport we were having for days together; and the more we killed the faster they came.

“ Now, on board the ould ‘Stedfast’ was Duster, the cleverest whaler, for an Indian, that ever threw harpoon.

“ Well, me bhoys, all av ye know the ugly mists that creep down over the countrhy in June; but when the captain sent us off one day to get a seal or two that were a-basking themselves on a point end av ice, the sun was shining as swate and clear as it will to-morrow. After a good drag, we launched her in the open say, and away we pulled right merrily, and we weren’t long aither bagging a skin or two. But, faith, we found there were more point ends than one, and seals on them, too; so on we went, and maybe went farther than we should have done, for first one big gun and thin another was fired to recall us, and, when we turned to look back, sorra a ship could we see at all, only a great wall av grey fog rollin’ slowly down towards us.

“ ‘Oh! golly, golly! look!’ cried Duster, starting up and pointing forward. Next moment we had forgotten

entirely the 'Stedfast,' the deadly mist, and ivirything else but a whale, as big as the hill av Howth, that lay on the water not a quarter av a mile ahead av us.

"'Golly for good !' exclaims Duster, with his grimmest smile, 'I means to catchee for quick, dat debel, directly.'

"'Och, sure,' says I, 'Duster, me bhoy, is it takin' lave av your sivinteen sinses ye are ? Who iver heard tell av takin' a fish wid one boat ? Who's to spear 'im ? and, troth, won't he pull us under the ice entoirely ?' But Duster only replied more determinedly than iver, 'I means to catchee he.' And what does the crayture do but made us make fast the end av the whale-line to a bit av a berg that lay foreninst us. And thin, me bhoys, all the ganious av the deed came up before me mind's eye as clare as the day. Then we pulled to the fish, and struck him, too ; for when did iver Duster miss ? Away went the great fish, as fast as forked lightning ; but, be jabers, lads, when the line was all paid out and our boat free, it wasn't so quick that the devil could thravel wid that bit av ice in tow ; and, sure enough, had the ice been a bit heavier, the line would have gone like a fiddle-string.

"'By golly,' said Duster, when the speared and dead monster laid alongside the pack, 'I tell you I catchee he directly.'

"Now, it was the duty of this choild, Teddy Welcome, to stand by that dead whale till the boat returned from the ship with assistance. I'd plenty av prog, sure, and 'baccy and a pipe ; but, for all that, I couldn't, for the dear loife av me, help feeling a bit lonely and frightened-loike when left all alone by meself alongside a dead whale, the mist curling round me, and maybe no end av bears within easy hail.

"Well, I don't think I'd been three hours on duty, pacing up and down the broad flat berg, by way of keeping meself warm, when out from the mist that I couldn't peer into at all, at all, came one wild roar, and then maybe twinty, and, as sure as I tell ye, the say and the ice seemed to shake right under me, and the pipe well nigh dropped out of me mouth.

"'Oh-h ! woa—woe !' came the cry again, more like a

thousand bulls than anything else in the earth or the ocean. It was the bears for sartain, after the dead whale, and maybe, thinks I, they've a bit of a score to settle with poor Teddy himself anent the ham-bones. ‘Oh-h ! woa—woe !’—nearer now, and presently a monster bull-bear looms out av the fog, and divilish well I knew all his relations were coming to the wake as well.

“‘Bedad, thin,’ says I, ‘if that’s yer game, here’s the back av me hand and the sole av me foot to the lot av ye.’ And by this and by that, me bhoys, I makes no more ado but just jumps off the ice on to the shovel lip av the great fish, and, faith, as I did so, I thought the greasy baste gave a bit of a wink wid his saucy wee eye, as much as to say, ‘You get inside, Teddy, me bhoy ; but, as soon as the bears eat the outside av me, *they’ll come to the stuffin’*.’ ‘It’ll take them some time, Mr. Fish,’ says I, and in I pops, aisy enough, too, for the big divil’s mouth was about half-open, and the whalebone hadn’t had time to stiffen. ‘Now, mercy on the sowl av ye, Teddy,’ says I, ‘for this is a quare sitivation, twinty hungry bears a-tearing at the outside av your shielln’, and maybe twinty sharks pulling away at the floor av it.’ For, throth, I could feel the fish shaking ivery minute, and hear the bears a-roaring outside av her.

“But worse was to come ; for, what wid the tickling o’ the sharks and the scratching av the bears—och ! my hair feels moving even yet, when I think of it. But, bedad, the whale began to revive. The great mouth av him opened, and slowly closed again ; a current av cold air rushed past me like a whirlwind ; thin I could hear, ay, and feel, the thundering av the tail av the mighty baste on the whater.

“‘Oh, the blessed saints protect me !’ I roared. ‘I’ll be in the bottom av the say in a jiffey, and ne’er more see Katie on the banks av the Liffey.’ And ‘Oh, Mr. Whale,’ I cries, ‘do take it aisy. Sure you invited poor Teddy inside the mouth av ye, and is it a dacint whale like yourself that would kill a poor bhoy intoirely ?’

“Well, my lads, whether it were the saints that a-done it or the blarney, I niver could tell, but the mighty fish

was as quiet as a herring evermore. So I lights my dudheen, and, in less than an hour, what with the smoking and the what-not, I was soon as sound asleep as a babe in a cradle, and draming, swately draming, of ould Oirland and Katie."

Here Teddy took the pipe from his mouth and heaved a sigh; perhaps he was ruminating now on the long bright days of the past. But we didn't allow any sighing, so we brought Teddy up with a round turn. "Brace up, Teddy!" we cried, and Teddy was all alive again in a moment.

"Och! be jabers!" he laughed, "you niver saw such fun in your born days as came in at the finish, for Duster and five boats' crews came back, but the sorra a Teddy was there to be seen; the bears had eaten him, boots and all. So wid many a sigh they set to work to 'flensh' the whale. And now, sure enough, the devil or the black drop must have been in me intoirely, to go and froighten me messmates, and them all talking so koindly av me, too. But, begorra! I couldn't help it. 'Git off av me back, ye devils!' I roared, 'wid your picks and your spades, or I'll sink wid the blissed lot av ye!' Bhoys, ye should have heard the silence that followed, and it wasn't long av getting down they were, aither. But next minute they were helping me up as koindly as ye plase, and then they rowled me in the snow for the thrick I'd been afther playing on them. And that's all, me bhoys. And it's to bed I'm going now at onct."

"Thank you, Paddy, thank you," said our engineer; "you can tell a good story, and man! it's so pleasant to hear that it is 'true.'"

"Sure, yes, sorr, that is the pleasantest part av it."

Said the engineer to the doctor and captain when all were together again around the cabin stove, "It wouldn't be a bad plan for us to take Paddy Ted's example, and just a' tell stories time about."

"Well," said Captain Ben, "I move that you begin it."

"Willing I would be, but I've nothing made up."

We laughed.

"You're going to make it up, are you?"

"Certainly," said Duncan Douglas; "things that are thought about are aye the best."

"Well," said I, "if no one else has anything to say, I will relate a little experience of my own and call it 'My Bachelorhood, and what came of it.'"

CHAPTER III.

MY BACHELORHOOD, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

I.

Written a Month before Christmas.

I'M not a bachelor. That is, I'm not a bachelor in the strict sense of the word, because I am married, and have a wee toddling family. But so far as doing for myself to some considerable extent is concerned, I have been a bachelor for more than a month. And now I will tell you how it happened.

A terrible hullabaloo got up at the top of the stair one day last autumn—the stair is close to my study. Ida had run away with one of Harold's toys, Harold had followed, and inflicted summary justice on her, using a wooden doll on her head, precisely as a Comanche Indian uses a war-club. And Inez had rushed to the rescue, and it ended by the whole three tumbling downstairs in a heap.

"Pon my word," I roared, "it is enough to try the temper of a saint. Sarah! Jane! anybody! can't you keep those children quiet?"

Well, it *was* provoking; I was concentrating. I was about to describe a scene that needed a little fine writing and no little pathos, and had just succeeded, by the aid of my violin and guitar, in working myself into a

delightfully sensitive mood, when the terrible scrimmage got up at the stair top. *Was it not provoking, and the printer waiting for copy?*

Even my wife admitted that it was provoking, when I mentioned the matter during luncheon.

"But," she added, with one of her most wifely smiles, "you were once a child yourself, Willie."

"I'm not quite prepared to deny it," I replied. "I might have been a child myself once. A child, mind you, that is *one* child, but, bother my whiskers, I wasn't three or four, was I? It is the plurality of the affliction I object to. Even an author might stand one pair of legs running overhead, one pair of lungs shouting over the banisters, but when it comes to three or four pairs of each, and their owners all bounding downstairs in a heap, a chaotic mixture of bare legs, bare arms, and distorted faces, with music to match, then—pass the potatoes, please."

"Heigho!" I sighed; "I sometimes do long for a little peace. I'm all behind with my printers; three editors are writing every day for copy, and one wretch has actually taken to telegraph for it. He wants to prove the gravity of the situation by working the wires and spending shillings without end. I'd give all the world for—another chop, please; thanks."

"Do you know," I continued, "I'd like to own an island in the vasty deep, or a lodge in a wilderness, or a lonely cave by the sounding sea, or a lighthouse. I would like to take the wings of the morning and fly unto—pudding? Yes, of course."

"I don't think," said my better half, "that the seriousness of your situation affects your appetite."

"Ah, dear!" I answered, "you're joking again. I tell you it is no joking matter. And there are those verses I promised to——"

Rat-tat.

"What is it, Sarah? A telegram? Humph. Now, read this, dear. Listen to this melting lay—

"Do pray send on next chapter. We are quite at a standstill."

"Why, my dear, an appeal like that is enough to draw tears from a rocking horse; it is indeed. It is—cheese? Yes, Sarah, a bit of Gorgonzola, and I say, Sarah, is there any of that celery left?

"And it isn't only the children, my dear, but all day long the hall bell goes ring-ding-ring, and the kitchen knocker rat-tat-tat. If it isn't the baker, it's the butcher, or the grocer, or fishmonger, or a man with a box, or a man with a bill. Why don't you tell them to only give one knock? Why don't you explain to them that they needn't shout as if the basement were on fire, and there were people asleep in the attics? Why don't you?—but there, you're going to cry—so like a woman. Sarah, bring my pipe!"

Old Boosey, a neighbour of mine, often pops into my study of a forenoon, and I have sometimes wished he wouldn't. He comes in free-and-easy-like by the French window, throws himself into my rocking chair, reaches up his hand and helps himself to my tobacco-pouch, and lights up.

"Go on," he says, "go on, write away. Don't let me interfere with your work; I love industry."

But it does interfere with my work. I don't want a man sitting smoking at my back when I'm writing, especially if I am not smoking myself.

The morning after the battle of the bairns at the stair top, old Boosey dropped in as usual.

"No news, I suppose," I said, by way of saying something.

"Well, no," he replied, "nothing of importance. By-the-bye, though, Miss Mittson is leaving that cottage on the hill that you fancied last year."

"Is she?" I said, becoming suddenly interested.

"Shutting it up," he went on, "going away for the winter months; afraid to stay there after the recent burglaries."

"By St. Thomas!" I cried, starting up, "the place would suit me all to pieces. I'm glad you looked in for once in a way, Boosey. I'll go and see the old girl without a moment's delay."

So I did. I took the foot-path across the field, and in less than half-an-hour I was closeted with Miss Mittson.

Yes, she would be pleased to let me have the cottage, furnished as it was, for the winter months. Glad indeed to get a tenant who would keep a fire in it.

"I suppose," she added, "*you* won't be afraid of burglars, but it is *so* gloomy here after nightfall."

"Bother the burglars, no," I replied, delighted at my success, and hopes of prospective peace. "There is one thing to be said in favour of burglars, Miss Mittson, they *are* quiet. They don't ring the bell, they don't knock at the door loud enough to wake the dead, and they don't come tumbling down stairs all of a heap when you are concentrating. So I'm your tenant, Miss Mittson, and very glad to be."

The lady went away in a week, and I took possession at once. My servant lad was engaged for a whole forenoon passing to and fro 'twixt my new study and my old, with barrow-loads of books, my violin and guitar cases, and last of all the cockatoo, for Cockie was to be my only companion at the cottage.

There is at least one thing in this world that neither Baron Rothschild nor Vanderbilt is rich enough to buy, and that is my cockatoo. I have sometimes thought she is the only being in the world who thoroughly understands me. When I talk to her she is attentive, and the remarks she makes in reply are neat and to the point. When I play slow airs on my old Cremona Cockie looks as solemn as a clerk at a vestry meeting; if I hit off a hornpipe, Newcastle fashion, Cockie is all alive in a moment.

"Go it," she cries, "Jack's alive. Keep it up. Keep it up. Keep it up."

And at last she fairly dances and sings with delight.
For Cockie is no ordinary cockatoo.

II.

Written a Month after Christmas.

Cockie and I are fairly settled down now in single blessedness at the Poplars. N.B.—It is called the Poplars—this cottage of Cockie's and mine—for the simple reason that there isn't a poplar tree within a quarter of a mile of it. I note that most cottages in the country are named according to the rule of contrariety and not according to Cocker.

But this is a charmingly quiet retired little box. I think that even Cockie feels that the change has done her good, for she chatters and dances constantly. She has my company all day, and she has warmth all night, for the last thing I do before going home is to bank fires, to keep her comfortable till morning, and her master returns to cheer her.

Yes, nothing could beat the repose and quiet that dwells for ever around this bonnie wee cottage. It is a long distance from any house, and not far from a lovely pine wood. To-night, as I sit here, pen in hand, I can hear the south wind moaning through the trees with a sooughing sound that some might call dreary, but it minds me of being on the ocean, and I love it.

It must have been a hermit who built this cot, for there is not even a road to it, only a tiny footpath, so no one ever passes the window, and the noise of wheels never falls on my ear, nor shouts of itinerant vendors of wares. Even tramps never come near it, perhaps they are too lazy, or probably they deem it deserted. Old Boosey called once; but Boosey is very fat and large, and doesn't like a footpath. Besides, I wouldn't let him smoke owing to Miss Mittson's curtains. So, on the whole, I don't think Boosey will come back.

There is a nice garden surrounding my cottage, a rose lawn in front of the French window of the room where I write, while beyond that is a somewhat melancholy-looking meadow, with a somewhat melancholy-

looking horse in it. I do not know the exact age of that horse, but he appears to me to be at least a hundred years old. It also appears to me that he was left there and forgotten by someone long, long ago, and that he will never be come for, and that he knows it. He stands leaning over my railing and looking at the cabbages, sometimes for an hour at a time, and the prevailing expression of his countenance is sorrow, blended with pensive meditation. I frequently give him a cabbage, and he sighs his gratitude.

There is a hare that often comes out of the wood and sits down in the meadow to wash its face; there is a cock-robin who sings to us on the gate, and cheekie sparrows who come to pick up the seeds that have been thrown out of Cockie's cage-drawer, and a bonny brown weasel that comes every fine forenoon, and standing on its hind legs close to the window, stares in at us.

I leave home at eight in the morning, riding as far as I can ride on my cycle, trundle the machine up through the meadow, enter my cottage, and am duly saluted by Cockie with as much joy and excitement as if I had newly returned from a six months' cruise. Then I light my fire, wash my hands, and settle down to work. At twelve o'clock, Cockie and I have cocoatina; I go home to lunch at one, back at two; Cockie and I have tea at five. Of course, we make our own tea and cocoa; that is the beauty of being a bachelor. We don't want servants pottering around us; it is a glorious thing—the adjective "glorious" is not a whit too strong—to be independent.

When I finally close the shutters and depart, Cockie says "*Poor Polly!*" with most melting emphasis on the *poor*.

The human being who first occupied the cottage, and who probably built it, might have been a hermit, but there is certainly nothing of the hermitage about it now, inside at all events, for our Miss Mittson's furniture and fittings, from ceiling to floor, from curtains to carpet, from the brackets with their vases to the fender with its fireirons, all are in the best of taste. And if you judged

of Miss Mittson herself from her room, you would not be far wrong.

The kitchen is a sight in itself. There are so many knick-knacks that I do not know the names of, and which I will not attempt to describe. Perhaps if I did the reader would say it was only a very ordinary kitchen after all. Perhaps the reader would be right, but men, and especially sailor men, are not much used to kitchens ; hence everything to me is fresh. For instance, that wonderful little brass lamp into which you pour a little paraffin, and can't see anything of the paraffin after you have poured it in. But it burns all the same, with a feeble smoky flame, and you surround it with a glass, which looks like a tumbler minus a bottom ; this is no doubt for fear of a spark. Then in the kitchen there are mysterious looking pepper-boxes, and mysterious coffee-pots, and kettles, and brushes, and pans, and a mysterious boot-jack, that goes by clockwork after you wind it up—no, it is a *roasting*-jack, or a spit, or something ; never mind, there it is, and you can't alter it. But everything in the kitchen is *so* clean ; the dresser is as white as a ship's quarterdeck, the sink itself like marble, the hearth-stone like snow, and the flat-topped fender is surely made of polished silver.

And if you judged of Miss Mittson herself by her kitchen you would not be far wrong.

Now I'll tell you, ladies, what I can do—and I timed myself doing it—I can lay my fire and light it, and trim my paraffin lamp, all within four and a half minutes ; from which I infer that I am rather a clever fellow. It isn't everybody who can clean the glass of a paraffin lamp. You do it when it is cold, and you can use the kitchen poker to shove the rag in, or you can use a carving fork, but it is as well to wash the fork afterwards before using it for anything else.

Before Miss Mittson went away, she gave verbal expression to a few of her hopes. They were as follows, to wit : She hoped I would always keep the garden gate shut, because the old horse had got in once and crunched the flowers, ate the greens, and rolled in the strawberry

bed ; she hoped I would always lock the door when I left at night ; she hoped I wouldn't spill the red ink on the drugget—what is a drugget I wonder ?—and finally, she hoped I wouldn't knock over the lamp and fire the house. I hope I won't either, but if I do, I'll jump out at the French window with Cockie's cage, first thing.

On the whole, I have got on wonderfully well as a bachelor, and I have picked up a few wrinkles about household management that are worth remembering.

Fire-lighting was a bother at first. I *once* used a round barrel-like morsel of pumice-stone, which I got through an advertisement. You are supposed to dip it in paraffin and it will go on lighting fires for a hundred years without soiling the fingers. I used it once just, and I daresay it went up the chimney—anyhow, I saw no more of it. The fire-lighters I now use are cakes, apparently composed of sawdust, pitch, and the parings of roborant plasters. But they do their duty.

I found a funny little brush in Miss Mittson's kitchen, with a handle to it, flat, like a canoe-paddle, with hair on one side. I have seen our Sarah touch up the bars of the grate with just such another brush, and it left them *so* tidy. I tried that trick, but I burned half the hair out of the brush and made Cockie cough. There is some skill required in using it, I suppose.

The ash-pan. I know it is called the ash-pan. It stands under the grate and keeps things tidy. It is a first-rate arrangement and holds a lot. It wants emptying though about once a week. I went out through the French window with it the first time. Boreas was blowing. Boreas caught the contents of the ash-pan before I could wriggle out. I was nearly choked. The Sahara was nothing to it. This *contretemps* did not improve my appearance, nor my temper—nor the carpet. Next time I took more care. I went out through the back-door, threw the business upside down on the dustheap, and ran off till the storm blew over. Oh ! yes, it is a capital thing an ash-pan, and if you capsize it deftly you feel happy, then, if in merry mood, you can use it as a tambourine while you march indoors again.

There is a shovel that looks like a sieve in Miss Mittson's kitchen. I knew what that was as soon as I saw it. It was for sifting and saving the cinders. There is nothing like economy in household matters. "Why," I said to myself, "shouldn't I sift and save the cinders?" I took the sieve-like shovel into the drawing-room and at once commenced operations in the ash-pan. But I didn't save many cinders, and I don't think the dust improved the furniture, for the keys of the piano afterwards made my fingers quite black; and before I could see my face in the looking-glass I had to clear a hole. I suppose there is an art even in cinder-sifting.

When a fire is kept up all day in a drawing-room I find it is necessary sometimes to tidy up the fireside. This is another operation that requires some skill, not to say tact. However, with a good ash-pan the labour is considerably lessened, because you can brush dust and ashes in under for a whole week, and no one is any the wiser. The inventor of the ash-pan ought to have a wooden monument. The hearthrug wants seeing to, say, once a fortnight. The easiest way to see to it, I find, is to roll it up like a school-map, escape with it through the French window, and beat it against the iron railing.

The blinds in my drawing-room window annoyed me considerably at first. They are those patent business that move on spring rollers, and you never can be sure of them. They have a mind of their own. Probably, when you have drawn them down for the night, and all is quiet and still—click—up goes the centre one to the very top, and if it be dark you can't help fancying there is a face out on the lawn staring in at you. I have rolled mine up and stowed them away under the sofa, where Miss Mittson will find them on her return.

Did bachelors who have done for themselves ever notice a disagreeable trick that some pairs of tongs have of plaiting their legs and feet, and refusing to move them either way at the moment they are most wanted? It is caused by luxation of their pelvic joints. Miss Mittson's drawing-room tongs often go like that, especially when a morsel of live coal jumps out of the fire and alights on the beautiful hearthrug—which it does not improve.

Talking about the tongs puts me in mind of the poker. I lost mine for ten whole days. What a funny thing to lose! I'm a little absent-minded when thinking, so there was no saying where it might or mightn't turn up; I looked for it in the parlour and in the passage, all over the kitchen, and among the coals in the cellar. No, it wasn't anywhere there. I might have put it behind the drawing-room looking-glass, but I hadn't; it might have fallen down behind the piano, but it hadn't. Nor it wasn't at the back of the chiffonnier, nor under the sofa, nor in any of the drawers. Neither had I abstractedly taken it out of doors to stake chrysanthemums. Finally I gave it up, it was lost, like Lucy Gray, so I had to use a toe of the tongs to poke the fire. But, lo and behold! when it became necessary one day to "make a clean fire-side," I found the poker right enough and snug enough in under the bulwarks of the fender.

One day, in another moment of forgetfulness, I forgot my latch-key, that is, I left it inside, and, slamming the door, locked myself out. This necessitated my climbing up by a spout over the water-butt, crawling along the roof of the scullery, and getting in through the gable window. As I did so I noticed a tall tramp-looking man in the wood leaning against a tree and watching me. I noticed that he had a most villainous-looking face, and that at his feet lay one of those straw bags that workmen carry their tools in.

"Poor fellow," I said to myself, "he is gathering acorns and fir-cones, no doubt, to make rustic picture-frames of."

But the poor fellow was doing nothing of the kind.

III.

Written in Bed.

I'm not at the Poplars now. My bachelorhood is ended. I am at home in my own house, and in bed. I have been ill—very ill. But I am convalescent at last, though my head is still bandaged and painful at times.

Cockie is in his cage yonder in a corner of the room, perched on one leg in a meditative mood; on the hearth-rug lies an immense dog of the boar-hound or Great Dane breed. He is watching me with one eye, but seems asleep with the other.

My window is wide open, and the soft spring air steals in and refreshes me, bringing with it the odour of flowers and the song of birds, and hope and health, and happiness—that strange dreamy contented feeling which only those who have been really ill and are coming back again to newness of life ever enjoy.

I do not long for loneliness now as I used to, even the voices of the children at play are music to me, and I'm rather delighted than otherwise when Boosey comes in and sits down and reads the paper to me or talks.

* * * * * * *

The Goat-and-Bells is a rustic little beer-house on the outskirts of our village. Its great kitchen does duty for parlour and tap-room as well. It has one long wooden table, and one long wooden daïs; on winter evenings, a roaring fire burns in the grate and glimpses of the cheerful blaze may be caught through the half-open door by people passing to and fro in the darkness. These and the sight of the landlord himself seated quietly smoking in his high but hard-backed arm-chair, with a mug of ale on the mantel-piece, lure many a one inside who has twopence to spend.

One evening there entered and seated himself on the daïs, near the fire, a tall, and by no means a handsome tramp. He threw down his basket between his feet, and iron tools could be heard rattling therein. The landlord bustled away to get the beer, and the funnel-shaped apparatus to heat it in, while the tramp bent over the blaze, and extended his fingers to warm them.

"On the road, measter?" said the landlord, reseating himself, and taking up his pipe.

"Yes," replied the tramp, eyeing him furtively, "I'm a looking for work. Hard times these for poor tradesmen."

"So they be," assented the landlord, "so they be; you're a tailor, aren't you? Ah! I thought so from the looks o' them long fingers o' yourn."

"Have a drop with me," said the tramp, after a pause.

"Thank 'ee," the landlord said, and he then waxed more cheerful and communicative.

"Much work about this village?" the tramp enquired.

"Not a very much," was the answer, "not a very much. Bless ye, the good folks all go away afore winter comes on."

"Ah! do they? Shut their houses up, I dare say?"

"No, not much either. Leaves some old woman in them. But they takes away their wallabies, they does. He! he!"

"Humph!" grunted the tramp. "Pretty little cottage that is, now, up at the woodside. Any chance of a bit of gardening to be got there. Eh?"

"Bless ye, no. Bless ye, no. Only one gentleman there."

"Only one, eh? Well, I passed down that way to-night. Heard people talking inside. Keeps company, I suppose?"

"Not he. Ha! ha! only his old cockatoo. He bees an author kind o' chap. Writes books and such."

"Rich?"

"Wonderful! All authors, they tell me, are. Make money as fast as wink, they does, and hardly knows o' the getting o' it. It's lucky bein' born wi' brains."

"That's so," said the tramp, who forthwith took to studying the fire again.

* * * * *

Dogs know a deal more than we give them credit for. Most people who understand these animals will admit this; but I have sometimes been half inclined to believe they—or some of them at least—are gifted with a kind of second sight. When I left home that day for my bachelor chambers in the lonely cottage, Kaiser, my splendid Dane, was standing at the gate, and I could not help pausing to admire his beautiful proportions.

All the grace and symmetry of a greyhound has Kaiser; all the strength and muscle of a mastiff.

But Kaiser was not there to be admired. He gave me distinctly to understand that he meant to accompany me to the cottage.

"No, Kaiser, no," I reasoned, "it cannot be. Much though I and Cockie would appreciate your company we may not have it. Miss Mittson's carpet must be treated with courtesy. Your feet are large, and the path is muddy; Kaiser, you cannot come."

Kaiser's face fell, his ears dropped, and his steel-grey eyes were filled with sorrow. But he did not attempt to disobey, only, when I looked back before turning the distant corner, the dog still stood at the gate gazing after me. He was thinking I might probably relent and whistle; but I did not. What pain and suffering my doing so would have saved me!

The day was an unusually dark one, and wore early to a close. Then drops of rain began to patter against the big panes in my French window, and I could see the giant pine trees nodding their black heads in the rising breeze.

I like to muse and think a little in the quiet twilight—'twixt the gloaming and the mirk—especially if I have anything pleasant to think about. But the moaning of the wind through the chinks of the casement induced in my mind a kind of melancholy to-night, which, strange as it may seem to some, I rather fostered than attempted to banish. The fact is I was about to write a chapter of a sea tale in which some pathos was needed, and one must feel to write well.

So I sat in my easy-chair, without lighting my lamp until it was almost quite dark.

Presently I started; I felt almost sure a form passed the window, that a white face had looked in at me. "Fancy, fancy, all fancy," I said half aloud. I picked up a morsel of guitar string and threw it on the fire. It looked like a tiny snake wriggling and leaping among the coals. I took up the guitar itself and let my fingers wander listlessly over the strings, touching them so

softly that they seemed to sigh out the plaintive old-world Scotch airs I played.

Soon after my head was bent over my paper; I was in the mood and busy, busy writing. But more than once that evening as I looked towards the window, the panes of which looked black with the darkness without, I thought I saw that white face again. I felt then sufficiently nervous to wish that I had not stowed away Miss Mittson's window blinds, *mad* and all though they were.

I went on writing, never heeding the time, until I had finished my chapter.

It was long past nine, and my wife would be getting anxious.

Presently, however, the moon would rise, and I would have light to go home.

I still had to look for a verse as a heading for my chapter, and so spent minutes rummaging among my poets. None would suggest anything, then I went to Miss Mittson's music stand and pulled forth some old songs. Ha! here it was, the very thing, and I must sit down before the piano and sing it. A bonnie old poem by Moore—

Ask of the sailor youth, when far
His light bark bounds o'er ocean's foam,
What charms him most when evening star
Smiles o'er the wave?—to dream of home.
Fond thoughts of absent friends and loves
At that sweet hour around him come,
His heart's best joy where'er he roves,
That dream of home, that dream of home.

The cockatoo screamed suddenly and in terror. I started up only to find myself confronted by a man armed with an axe, the self-same villainous face I had seen in the wood. I started up only to be felled with a tremendous blow on the head. It was a murderous blow dealt with murderous intent.

I reeled and fell, my elbow striking against the piano keys and evolving a discordant crash. But a louder crash followed—the crash of breaking glass, and I saw my noble Kaiser spring in through the window like a

great wild wolf, throttle and floor my assailant—then—all was a blank with me for a time.

When I recovered consciousness, the noble dog was licking my face, but the tramp was gone. In his anxiety about me, I suppose, Kaiser had permitted him to escape, but the fellow must have been severely torn. He was traced next day all through the wood by a trail of blood, and at one place he must have sunk to the ground and lain for some time, for here beneath a tree, where the ground was deeply bedded with withered pine-needles, there was quite a large pool. But the tramp was never found.

“ Dear old Kaiser, come and let me pat you.”

But for *all* that, and for all this, Miss Mittson’s cottage is a dear little house, and sweetly quiet, and I really mean to take it again next winter, but after night-fall Kaiser shall lie in the rustic porch, and on my table cheek-by-jowl with my ink-stand shall be—my revolver.

* * * * *

“ Thank you right heartily, my boy,” said Captain Ben Crisp; “ and now, if you’ll listen, I’ll give you a little experience of my own. A love story, too.”

“ Hurrah! for a love story,” we cried.

“ I’ll call it ‘The Widow’s Bonanza.’ ”

CHAPTER IV.

THE WIDOW'S BONANZA:
A LOVE YARN.

I.

In a Log Hut.

THIS bit of a yarn of mine hinges, as you might say, upon a widow. It revolves round a widow.

She was a very wealthy widow too, for her departed husband had left her, not only a plum, but a bonanza! Even at this moment I cannot say exactly how much of riches a bonanza represents, but I know it is something enormous. The widow in question owned—so they said—half a dozen silver mines out and out, or out and in, and she could hardly count the number of shares she held in gold ones. So it must be admitted she was a catch; she was really worth cocking one's Glengarry at.

It was all arranged that I should marry this widow, and become the proud owner of her bonanza—for the Married Woman's Property Act had not then been read a third time. When I say that it was all arranged that I should marry her, I ought to add, between myself and Roddy McKoy, and this before I had ever clapped eyes upon her.

But Roddy had seen her, and been introduced to her also, at a wedding in San Francisco, where his ship was lying at the time. His ship was also mine, a merchant barque; he was captain, I was the only passenger, and Roddy's friend and guest. As time was of little object just then to either of us, we had started North and East on a long camping tour, and at the end of three weeks found ourselves far away from civilisation of any kind,

proprietors *pro tem.* of a log hut half-way up a rugged pine-clad mountain, and not far from a lake where fish

Sprang wanton to be caught.

The life we led was so completely suited to the tastes of both Roddy and myself that we resolved not to permit even the approaching wedding—which he *must* attend—to interfere with our pleasures or cause us to break up camp.

So Roddy set off alone for San Francisco, and I held the hut till his return. I had my gun and fishing-rod, and plenty of books—what more did I want? There were wolves in the forest, but wolves don't attack human beings in summer; there was a stray grizzly not far off also—well, I only prayed he might appear in Roddy's absence, that I might lay his skin at my friend's feet when he returned, as a trophy of my prowess. There were Indians about also, but they were all friendly; so I read, and fished, and shot, and slept at night more sweetly and sound than ever I have done since.

I was so sure that Roddy would return on the very day he promised that I had an extra good dinner waiting for him, and sure enough just as the red sunset clouds, that were reflected so charmingly in the lake below, were beginning to change to purple and grey, the dear old man came toiling up the hill with an immense haversack slung over his shoulder on his gun. I knew, without being told, that there were plenty of good things in that sack, so after dinner I heaped more wood on the fire—for high up on these hills even summer nights are damp and chill—and Roddy and I sat down to enjoy our evening.

I wonder if I could give the reader any idea by pen and ink of the appearance of my friend Roddy as he sat there beaming over the big meerschaum he held on to? I'll try. He had, then, white hair and a long snowy beard, a jolly rosy face with hardly a wrinkle in it, and eyes of pleasant blue, brimful of sincerity always, brimful of merriment and fun as often as not.

Was he an old man? No. That is the curious part of it. Albeit, his hair was like the peak of Ben Lomond

on a winter's morning, Captain Roderick McGruer was barely five-and-forty.

Do you like the picture? But stay, you haven't heard Roddy speak yet.

Roddy was Irish.

Irish to the very backbone, and I don't care who knows it. For—and I am glad to have an opportunity of saying it—I have met with as much genial hospitality and as many genuine gentlemen in Ireland as ever I have done out of it. And I am not Irish myself either.

Probably, though I ought to apologise for Roddy's brogue, I am fully aware that educated Irishmen do not talk with a brogue, and that better English is spoken in Dublin than in London, so you will call my friend a rough nut. Perhaps he was, but dear me! we should not judge nuts by the shell, but by the kernel. Roddy's heart was as innocent and kind as the heart of a little child.

"Well, Roddy, my boy," I said, "I'm so glad you have returned. I was beginning to think the time just a trifle troublesome. Now we'll have six weeks of it at least among these glorious hills. Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Sure enough, and I did then," said Roddy. "And what's more," he continued, "I met the richest and the nicest and the prettiest widow ever I clapped eyes on 'twixt Belfast itself and Ballaporeen."

"Don't let your pipe out, Roddy," said I; "but just heave round and tell me all about her."

"But troth," said Roddy, "smoking is dry work, and a drop of hot water and sugar would moisten the tongue."

"Sly dog!" I said; "but what do you say now to a taste of something warm that would meter with dudheen."

"It's potheen you're maning," he replied; "och! you rascal! if you ain't Irish yourself, sure you ought to have been."

I rose and got hold of my friend's haversack, and extracted a bulky flask from the bottom of it; the kettle was singing suggestively close by the fire, so—we made some medicine.

Then Roddy told me all about the widow and her bonanza. He went into raptures over her beauty and over her wealth, and spoke as if he himself had the disposing of both her hand and her fortune.

"And sure," he said, "you'll be the happy man, when you marry her. Why, it isn't sailing the salt seas you'll be after that. And it is so proud you'll be that you'll hardly walk on the same side av the street wi' poor Roddy."

"But my dear silly old man," I cried, "what nonsense you are talking. Even supposing I was willing to propose such a thing as marriage to this wealthy widow of yours, how sure are you she wouldn't show me the back of her hand?"

"Is it the back av her hand you're talking of?" he exclaimed. "Och! listen to the boy. Bedad! it is jump at the offer she would, she'd tumble straight into your arms, like a ripe pache, before the words were well outav the mouth av ye."

"You really think so, Roddy?"

"Saints! yes, my lad, I'm sure av it. What dy'e think widows are made av? Eh? Tell me that."

"Well," I replied, "I don't know, I haven't had a great deal of experience of widows. But if I actually thought——"

"Don't say another blessed word about it," interrupted Roddy. "It's all arranged. You're as good as married to her already. Shake hands with me. You're the luckiest dog in the world."

"If she be as nice, Roddy, as you say——"

"Howld your tongue till you see her——"

"Then," I continued, gazing meditatively at the spout of the little tin kettle, "a bonanza is certainly a fine thing, a fellow really could do a deal of good with a bonanza."

"I believe ye, my boy," quoth Roddy, "and faith, if I were only a hundred years younger, it isn't flinging the widow and her bonanza at your head I'd be, friends and all as we are."

Roddy pulled hard at his great meerschaum; my

hand, with the cigar in it, dropped upon my knee, and I began to see pictures in the fire. The burning logs formed themselves into smiling valleys and glens, the white ash on them was the snow on the mountain-tops, that towered skywards on the far-away horizon. There were beautiful fields, and waving forests, and lakes and streams, and all, all were mine. There was a cloudland of trees that rose and rolled over a hill, and in the centre smoke ascending from the broad chimneys of a noble mansion, and that mansion was mine. See, the trees part asunder like a screen, and I can behold a park with deer in it, and rose gardens, and ribboned flower-beds, and terraces on which fountains were playing, and park and all were mine. Look ! the snow is falling, and the green lawns grow crisp and white, and the sun goes down ; but lights stream out from rose-tinted windows, and I can hear the sound of music and happy voices within, and I long to be among them—for that pleasant home is mine.

Yes, all is mine, all that is pleasant and lovely in life, for what is it in this wide world that a bonanza cannot buy ?

II.

Roddy's Red Hair, and what came over it.

I don't know how long I sat there, dreamily gazing at the fire, but the life died out of the landscape at last, the snow crept farther and farther down the hillsides, the mountains themselves grew grey and black at last, and the rose tint fled from the valleys.

I started up with a slight shiver, and looked about for more wood. Roddy's head was thrown back—he was watching the smoke that curled upwards from his lips.

"Roddy," I cried, as I replenished the fire, "you are dreaming, my friend."

"Draming, is it?" said Roddy; "yes, yes—draming. An old man's drame."

"Nonsense, Roddy, nonsense ; you're not an old man

by chalks. Come, pull yourself together. Look at that glorious fire. Tell me a story, drink your *eau sucre*, and heave round with a yarn."

"Sure, there isn't the ghost of a story in Roddy at all, at all," was the reply.

"Tell me something, anyhow. I don't mean to turn in yet for a whole hour. What made you go to sea? Were you ever in love? What made your hair so white?"

"I'll answer your questions all in a bunch," said Roddy. "I've been in love. Sure now you mustn't laugh at me when I tell you; *she* was only a child, and *I* was nothing else myself; but the love I bore has never left me, and will light up my heart while life does last."

"Capital, Roddy. Go on. Was it this love which silvered your hair?"

"No, that was the rheumatiz."

"Rheumatism. Lord! how unromantic."

"Will you hold your wheesht till I tell you? When I was a boy, then, it's a lovely auburn my hair was, but troth, my schoolfellows didn't hesitate to call it red. And I didn't hesitate to punch their heads for that same; but this only made matters worse, as you may well believe. It wasn't the boys I was caring for, anyhow, either back or fore, but a little colleen—such a sweet, wee, blue-eyed, saucy-nosed, cherry-lipped chick-a-biddy was surely never seen on earth before. I thought I would like to kiss her. I dramed about it for months before I made the venture. But when my mind was made up at last, then I went straight away and borrowed a shilling, and bought a whole pound of charming swates, and went and waylaid her in a wood, coming home, all by her purty self, from school.

"'My darling Aileen,' says I, 'your Roddy's heart is running over wi' the love that is in it for you. And it's a whole pound of swates that I've bought, and I'll give you them all, eviry one of them, for a single kiss.'

"And what think you did she do? Why, she took the pound of beautiful swates as cool as a trout, and put them in her bag; then she tells me, with a toss av her head:

" 'It's only black-haired boys I like,' says she, 'and I would never kiss *carrots*.'

" I went away home with a lump in my throat as big as a phaisent's egg. I read *Robinson Crusoe* for a whole week—then ran off to the sea.

" So that's an answer to one av your questions. And it was love that did it entirely. Love and carrots. Be jabbers, it's the truth I'm telling you, I never looked into the glass without cursing the colour o' those same carroty locks.

" The boy is the father av the man. I grew up and up and up, till I was just as big as you see me now. And my hair grew redder than ever. But I never forgot little Aileen ; I never could love another somehow. I never courted a girl with a view to marriage either, for fear of courting a rebuff, all along of my carroty hair. But the time I might have spent as most young men do spend their spare time, I devoted to my profession, and soon rose to be first mate of as purty a ship as ever carried a stun's'l-boom.

" Well, things thrrove with me wonderful-like, and before I was thirty I was master o' my own ship, and though it's myself that says it that shouldn't, there wasn't a smarter sailor ever stepped a quarter-deck—bar the red hair.

" But about this time I took a cargo out to Bombay, and was loading up with rice to return, when lo ! and behold I was laid up with the faiver and rheumatiz. I couldn't move hand nor foot to save my life, so I was glad enough to get carried to hospital. The first mate took home the ship, and there I was left on my back and pretty nearly on my beam ends.

" It was months and months before I was able to get out av bed, and crawl to the window of my ward, to see how the world wagged without me. It was just after the rainy season, and everything looked cool and green and beautiful. And there was the sun shining all by himself up in the blue, blue sky, as he never shines anywhere out av India, and down below were the houses with their painted and gilded walls, and the palanquins going hither

and thither, and the buggies and the bheastie-wallahs* with their bags, and the cows, and the crows, and the water-buffaloes, and Arabs in their robes, and the purty Hindoo maidens all dressed in green and crimson silk. Och ! one and all av them put together made up such a picture that I nearly grew well on the spot.

" I soon felt a trifle weak though, and faint and chilly, and so I drew back. But now, what with the glare av the sun, and all the brightness I'd been beholding, I couldn't see much in the room, but I began to grope my way back to bed. When all at once—as sure as I'm alive—there, right, foreninst me stood

THE GHOST OF MY OWN FATHER,

who had been dead and buried for ten long years. And the sorra a stitch had the ould man on him either, but a long white shirt that came down to his knees and a red Kilmarnock nightcap. ' What have I to do to be frightened at my father ? ' thought I to myself. But at that moment, faith ! you could have floored me with a farthing candle, and never a taste av a prayer could I remember either.

" ' Och ! father,' I says, ' and it is out of the cowld grave you're coming, and all the way over from Oirland, to visit your sinful son ? '

" But he never stirred, and he never spoke, though his lips were moving, and when I stretched out my hand to touch him, sure I found it wasn't my father at all, but my own image in the glass.

" And that was how this faiver had left me, as grey as an ould badger, as white as the snow, or near it.

" Had I been struck stone blind, I don't think it would have been a bigger blow to me ; here was thirty years knocked off my life all at onct, as you might say.

" Before I fell ill of the faiver, I used to go into society a bit, by way av diversion, and red-haired and all that I was, there was many a girl—haythen and Christian—that didn't object to me saying soft things to her. But now as soon as I got better all was changed, though I didn't

* Water-carriers.

find this out so much till after I left the Injies, and came back to England.

"I wasn't going to lay up for a white head anyhow, so I just went about as before. But now everybody 'old Roddied' me. It was old Roddy this, and old Roddy that; I was an old fogie, an old cock and a codjer. 'You won't be going to this ball, Roddy?' one would say. 'Your dancing days are over, Roddy, I dare say?' another would remark; and so on, and so forth, while, and after all, my legs and my heart were as young as anybody's, and it was only my hair that was old.

"I used to go courting now just to spite myself, and sometimes a girl would seem very soft on me, and maybe finish up by saying it was far better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.

"It was never a bit of use o' me sayin' that Smith was a year older than me, or that Jones only wanted six months o' my age. The girls didn't contradict me, it is true, but it was only for dacency's sake that they didn't.

"'Och! Roddy,' I used to say, as I shook my fist at my face in the glass—'Och! Roddy, you thundering ould idjit; isn't it time you were making your test'ment?'

"Before the faiver and the rheumatiz, my boy, Roddy used to be told off to take the prettiest girls down to dinner; now it was any toothless old maid, and if an ould lady of sivinty had a quarter of a mile to walk it was Roddy was sent with her, as certain as sunrise.

"What is it I wouldn't have given to get back my pristine locks, carotty and all as they were? What indeed!

"Well, one fine morning I was reading the paper, when what should I see but an advertisement of some wonderful mixture to change grey hair to brown in the twinkling of an eye. 'Sold by all hairdressers,' said the advertisement.

"I was starting for Cork to take a ship in a day or two, so I pitches the paper away, and 'Hurrah!' I cries, 'Roddy will get young again!'

"So that same evening down the strate I goes, and down another strate, and up a third, and at last I sees a

barber's pole ; so in I goes, and takes a seat in the chair.

" "A shave, sir ? Yes, sir ; certainly, sir. Getting rather grey, aren't you ? " he says presently.

" "How ould would you take me to be then ? " I says.

" "Bout five-and-twenty," he says. " Hair is nothing to go by."

" I felt as proud as Lucifer, bedad.

" "Like your whiskers trimmed, sir ? Can I sell you a case of hair-dye, sir ? " says he.

" "Will it act, sir ? " I says.

" "Why, certainly, sir. Thousands of customers, sir. Thank you, sir. Full instructions how to use it inside, sir. Good evening, sir."

" Back I goes to my private apartments, and there by the light of a pair of candles I carried out the instructions to the letter, and goes to bed, after washing my hair, as happy as a king, and dramed that all the girls were fighting for young Roddy, as they called me.

" The first thing I spied in the morning was the bath, my boy, that I'd washed my head in. What a sight ! The sorra a bit blacker could the water have been had you been killing-cuttle fish in it. Then I had a look in the glass. Oh ! wurra, wurra ; my own face was as red and rosy as ever, but my hair was as green as the leeks ! No wonder my eyes glared out of the sun-reddened face of me. I was wild. I was mad.

" "Och ! Roddy, you rogue," I cried ; " you murderin' consated ould villain. Of Fanian proclivities too, which you daren't deny. It's often and often you've wished to see "the green above the red," and bedad, ye see it this blissid morning with a vengeance. And there's a smell of sulphur and brimstone all about, too, that would make anybody believe the devil was in the room entirely."

" Well, Roddy, and what did you do ? "

" What did I do ? Why, sure I sent for a barber, and had my hair cut off, and wore a wig till it grew again. One lesson was enough for me, and I'll be old Roddy till the grave closes over me. But now, my boy, what about the widow and the blessed bonanza ? "

" I've been thinking, Roddy," I replied, " that it really

wouldn't be a bad plan after all for me to marry her. Meanwhile I'd like to turn in and dream about it. It's getting late, you know."

"The best plan out," said Roddy.

So both of us rolled ourselves up in our rugs, and lay down on our skin couches, and the first thing either of us was sensible of, was the sunlight streaming in through the chinks in the door, and falling on the floor, on the hearth, and the half-burned logs that lay thereon.

III.

Where the Love comes in.

It was Roddy's turn to light the fire and make the breakfast—a fact I was not slow to remind him of—and while he got up and bustled around, I lay still, thinking, dreamily thinking, about that bonanza. I must confess that the widow herself was a mere secondary consideration.

"I say, you know," I said to Roddy, as we sat down to our meal of fried fish, camp-baked bread and coffee—"I say, Roddy, my boy, we must not go like a bull at a gate in this bonanza business."

"To be sure not," replied Roddy; "but hay must be made while the sun shines; the iron must be struck while the iron is hot."

Indeed, my friend wanted to break up the encampment at once and hie off to 'Frisco, but I wouldn't hear of such a thing. Life was far too pleasant where we were, and the widow would keep. So I thought.

About a week after, Roddy and I were returning about sunset to our hut, tired with a long day's gunning, and carrying in our bags the fruits of the chase. Bang, my Irish setter, rushed on in front of us up the hill, but almost immediately returned barking. Then we observed, to our surprise, that smoke was issuing from the one chimney of our log castle.

"Indians, evidently," I said; "but they are taking it coolly."

"Sure, and you're right," said Roddy.

It was no Indians, however, but an old trapper, who had come all the way from 'Frisco with a letter for Roddy—a letter from his newly-wedded friend.

Poor Roddy tried to speak after reading it, but he failed; so he seized me by the coat, and dragged me forth, and thrust the letter into my hands.

"Yes," it ended, "after your glowing description of camp-life, nothing will satisfy my wife but coming out to spend the tail-end of our honeymoon at your log-hut. So get ready. We'll be with you five days after you receive this. Mrs. Morrack is coming with us."

"Hurrah!" cried Roddy, skipping around like a last-season lamb. "Hurrah! Mrs. Morrack is coming!"

"Who is Mrs. Morrack?" I asked.

"Didn't I tell you, man? It's the widow, she is: the widow with the bonanza."

I confess I was every bit as much excited as Roddy now.

The widow was coming!

The bonanza was going to arrive!

Five such busy days I had never spent in my life before. The old trapper stayed with us and proved invaluable. We built a new hut; we glorified and improved the old one. We made a splendid archway over the doorway, and laid down green boughs for the dainty feet of the bride to tread upon. We found out a little alcove some distance from the huts on the hillside, and turned it into a rustic summer arbour; and we constructed a winding path to it also, so that, when finished, Roddy declared the whole thing was as complete

As a coach and six or a feather bed.

They didn't arrive on the fifth day, but they did on the sixth. Roddy's friend Woolmar, his young and pretty bride, the widow Morrack, horses and mules, servants and sacks, bags and baggage and all.

I declare in honesty I never spent so jolly a time as that fortnight. We were all as happy as children. The bride was delighted with everything; we walked and

talked, and hunted and fished, and feasted, and flirted, and sang.

And the widow? Ah! yes, the widow. She was all that Roddy had described her. She was young, beautiful, divine. She wore no crape or grave-yard decorations, but light was the prevailing colour of her dress; light and airy, as became that bright sunshiny summer weather.

I settled down to serious flirtation from the very first. I constituted myself her chaperon, her knight, her servant, her slave. I'm not sure I didn't fall in love with her out and out—I believe I did. Was it any wonder? Consider the situation and the surroundings. The lovely scenery, the lovely weather, the waving woods, the lake on which we rowed, the widow herself—all tulle and gauze, and silken fringe, and fair soft hair. A witching bonnet, an odour of new-mown hay, smiles, dimples, a saucy nose, bluest of eyes, alabaster teeth and—the bonanza!

Dear old Roddy; he left us as much alone as was possible. The widow herself noticed it. She told me one day that she didn't think my friend liked her—that he seemed always to avoid her. But always, when Roddy got me alone, he used to ask how things were progressing.

"Fairly well, I think, Roddy," I used to tell him.

"Well, heave round," then Roddy would answer.

"You see," I said one day, "I'm afraid to be too precipitant. Precipitancy might spoil everything."

"Fiddlesticks!" was Roddy's reply. "Precipitancy is the best mixture out for a widow. Take my advice, my boy. Go for a moonlight row on the lake to-night. Get well into the centre av the water, then let the boat drift and lave the rest to Nature."

I might have taken Roddy's advice, only a summer storm came on that night; the moon was seldom seen, the lake was white with breaking waves, and the tall pine trees bent like reeds and snapped before the force of the gale. So we spent the evening in general jollity in the log-hut.

Next day the only mementoes of the storm were the fallen trees. The day was bright and sunny, and the sun soon dried the ground and grass. In the afternoon I happened to be extended, book in hand, close behind the arbour, when I was aroused from a kind of reverie by the sound of voices inside the little bower. I listened, I couldn't help it.

"Sit down," said Roddy—it was he—"excuse my freedom. It's a few years older than you I am, faith. What a sweet evening it is—isn't it, my dear?"

"Yes," replied the widow, laughingly, "but I'm sure, Captain McGruer, you didn't bring me here merely to tell me that."

"Well—ahem!—well, no—to be sure, it wasn't. What an old fool I am, sure-ly!"

There was a pause—an awkward one for Roddy, I felt certain. But presently he went on again—

"You see, my dear—nay, don't start, and don't blush—there is nobody here to listen but your purty self. Well, you see, it's a saicret I'm going to tell ye."

I felt mad with Roddy just then. What right had he to go and make love on my behalf? Was I a child, that I couldn't tell my own story when I got a good chance? To be sure, I wasn't. I had a good mind to cough, and reveal my presence, but I didn't. After all, Roddy, poor, dear innocent soul, was doing it for the best.

"Yes, it's a saicret," he said, "and it's only known to two as yet."

"Oh, do tell," sighed the widow; "don't tantalize, Captain."

"Well, then, you swate, purty thing, what would you say if there was someone dying for ye entoirely—someone thinking av ye every blessed minute of the day, and draming of ye every night on his pillow?"

"Bravo, Roddy!" I thought.

"It would be very nice," simpered the widow.

"Someone," Roddy continued, "who is choking to tell of the moutains of love that are burning like volcanoes in his buzzom."

"Go on," said the widow. "It would be delicious."

" Someone who has no thought av happiness that doesn't centre in you—someone who doesn't care a farthing rushlight for anybody in the wide world but yourself—someone who never sees the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, when you're near him—someone who doesn't feel the taste o' the mate he is eating when you're sitting at the table foreininst him—someone, sure, who would gladly devote a whole lifetime to—to—to keeping your little toes warm ? "

" How prettily you can make love, Captain ! " said the widow. " And someone really loves me as much as all that ? "

" Och, yes, and a deal more. It's meself that has no words to describe the love that is ating up the heart av him, till it's disappearing by degrees, like a copper nail in a bottle of vitriol."

" I know it—I know it," sighed the widow. " I have eyes, Captain McGruer, and they are woman's eyes. I know and see that he loves me, though he is very shy about it, and often has seemed to avoid me. And now, Captain, why should I hesitate to speak the truth ? I reciprocate his affection. My heart—a heart that warmed to him on the first day I saw him—my heart is his, and his only."

Here *my* heart gave a great thud of delight—the bonanza would be a certainty, after all. I wanted to jump and dance for joy, but I was compelled to keep still.

" Hurrah ! " I heard Roddy exclaim. " Sure, this is the happiest day in my life. And what a happy little darlint of a woman you'll be yourself ! I'll be off, and tell my friend at once that you love him—that you'll marry him—that—. Why, my dear, whatever is the matter with ye at all at all ? "

" Captain McGruer ! " the widow exclaimed, excitedly. " Oh, Captain, your friend ! That—*man* ! "

And now there was the sound of convulsive weeping in the arbour.

" Saints be about us this blessed day ! " Roddy cried ; " but by all the powers, what does it mane at all ? Sure I don't know whether my ould head or my heels are uppermost."

"Weren't you," sobbed the widow, "weren't you—ma—a—aking love—on your—own account?"

I had listened long enough. A thought came to me like an inspiration, and I acted on it at once.

I boldly entered the arbour.

"Mrs. Morrack," I said, "I have heard all. I did not listen intentionally, but I have listened. Now let me tell you that though I have dared to love you, this generous friend of mine—don't you dare to interrupt me, Roddy—loves you too; but he would have sacrificed his own happiness to mine. That is the truth, Mrs. Morrack, and you will be happy together, I know, for that big manly heart of his can love you more in five minutes than I could have done in fifty years. Your hand, dear Roddy; yours, Mrs. Morrack. There—"

The widow smiled through her tears as I placed her little hand in Roddy's, and said in a heavy-father tone of voice—

"Bless you, my children!"

As for Roddy, I never saw him so taken aback in my life before.

But, nevertheless, in less than a month Roddy McGruer became the husband of the Widow Morrack, and the Widow Morrack became Mrs. McGruer.

* * * * *

I never saw much signs of a bonanza though. Only Roddy ceased going to sea, and settled down into a quiet old English gentleman.

But, surely, a bonanza after all is neither here nor there, if a man gets a woman who loves him!

Let Bobbie Burns reply—

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That *soft* contentment, peace and pleasure;
The bonds and bliss o' mutual love,
Ah! that's the chief o' world's treasure.

"Now, boys, to hammock, and I expect by next sea-pie night that you will all have your yarns ready to spin. Good night."

* * * * *

And the following Friday found us once more seated round the cabin stove, and being called upon for a sketch of my life I gave the following "Twig from my Family Tree."

CHAPTER V.

A TWIG OR TWO FROM MY FAMILY TREE.

To be taken with a few Grains of Salt.

MY fami'y history, and pedigree ? I never knew I possessed either until a few years ago, when my father and the editor of the *Buckie Observer* happened to be rival candidates for a certain office in that bright wee village, then vacant. The editor's kindness was all the more disinterested on this account, and his earnestness in searching the Buckie archives and the parish registry for facts bearing on our family history was worthy, probably, of a better cause. It is to him I am indebted for the following interesting particulars of the life and time of my forbears.

The females of my illustrious line, it seems, were nearly all wicious—wery, wery wicious—and one was burned for a witch. Nearly all the males that weren't hanged died about forty, falling victims to the theory that man was made to live on grog alone. Patriotic to a degree my people must have been ; they built no houses to speak of, they wore no garments worth mentioning, even in the eighteenth century, and their marriage ceremony was excessively Scotch and easy—consisting in jumping backwards over a broomstick, with a bottle of whiskey in one hand and a "bannock o' barley meal " in the other.

It appears that every one of my ancestors were married at one period or another of their existence, which, considering the simplicity of the service, is not to be wondered at. But one was very much married indeed, and as her name is in some degree historical, I have, perhaps, some reason to be proud of her. She lived in a cave in the centre of a deep dark forest on the northern bank of the Tweed, and was well known in the regions round about as "the wife o' Beith, with the iron teeth." She was known and feared as well. She was hardly the person any young gallant would have willingly wedded. She didn't take to marrying until somewhat past the age of fifty, and then she stole her husbands, and was never known to keep one dead or alive more than a month. She was constantly waited upon by about fifty creatures that some averred were evil spirits. At all events, it seems they were wild and uncouth enough looking to belong to a far worse world than this. Accompanied by a dozen or two of these uncanny beings, she was in the habit of fording the Tweed, and making a raid on the houses of the resident gentry, and bearing thence

"A gallant gay to be her ain good man."

If, in the course of a month, a ransom was paid, the captive was floated down stream in a coffin, *alive*; if no ransom was paid, he was floated down the stream just the same, only nailed up and no holes in the lid.

This terrible woman amassed wealth untold, and the editor of the *Buckie Observer* would never have mentioned her at all, only there happens to be a coronet in my family, and it appears that it was the "wife o' Beith's" money that paid for it in the first instance.

There were not many such illustrious personages in our ancient family as this "wife o' Beith." I might go further and state, without fear of contradiction, that all the others dwindled into insignificance when compared with the lady of the iron teeth.

One or two, however, deserve mention—so thought our friend, the editor. There was, for example, old Peter McGrab, the eminent gaberlunzie,* the man who first

* Scotch = a professional beggar

elevated begging to the ranks of the fine arts. His celebrated saying, "There are tricks in a' trades except the good honest beggerman's," is remembered till this day in Scotland. Then there was old John McGregor, of Reelock Glen; "Honest John," he was called in the district. He never wanted whiskey in his house, nor sheepie's hams in his larder. Probably he made the whiskey, but he couldn't have made the hams. He met his death in a singular kind of way. In their passage up stream, the salmon had to get over a fall fifteen feet high. They just took their tails in their mouths, then let go, and up they went like so many bits of whalebone. But they didn't all succeed, and those that didn't fell back into a big creel placed beneath the fall for the purpose. There was a rickety kind of bridge over the fall, and honest John, my ancestor, used to go there at daybreak and fish up the unfortunates with a long pole and hook. One day, alas! he missed his footing, and over he went head first into the creel. He was found there dead, and the verdict was, "Let him take it." But John hadn't lost anything by the job after all, for years before he had given a *post obit* to a famous surgeon—in other words, he had sold his body for dissection, and duly drank the money.

The editor of the *Buckie Observer* was unable to say which side my ancestors took during the great rebellion. One thing is certain: one of them, a long-legged, half-naked Highlander, was captured on the field of Culloden the day *after* the battle. When asked to tell at once what king he was for—George, or Charles—he gave vent to the following utterance, which is highly characteristic of the "gay Gordons":

"Och! she is neither for King Sheorge nor for Sharlie; she is just for King Spoolie."*

Some of my people must have been great wanderers in their own country. There was Supple Eppie, for instance, well known to every gaoler in Aberdeenshire. She was in the tinware line, as a rule. She was never

* King Loot.

seen without a string of ragged children hanging about her skirts—her own, of course—an immense bundle of glittering tin utensils over her shoulder, and a bag of meal in front to balance it. But there used to be many queer little odds and ends and unconsidered trifles in that bag as well as meal. Eggs, for *eggsample*, or even a chicken or two, or a shirt, for at harrying a hen-house, or clearing a clothes-line, there wasn't Supple Eppie's equal in all the country round.

My ancestors must have been great travellers abroad as well, for the editor of the *Buckie Observer* took no small pains to show that a place called Botany Bay is almost peopled by gay Gordons.

Men of wealth some of my forbears undoubtedly were, though in those days, when might was right, they never seem to have been able to hold their own; and attempts to seize by force what they considered their property led to endless lawsuits, in which their sworn enemies—the police—always came off triumphant. This the Buckie archives can show until this day. These same archives mention the trades and professions some of my illustrious forbears seem to have followed. One was a furrier—specialty, rabbit skins; another an itinerant ironmonger—specialty, tinware (this might have been Supple Eppie); a fourth was a celebrated distiller—privatea; fifth a musician, evidently of some eminence, because he was a performer on two instruments, the bagpipes and the Caledonian Straduarius, or Cremona; a sixth was a cut above trade, a general in the army—general dealer. I need only mention three others: One a sportsman—specialty, hawking; the other a medical man, inventor and vendor among the Highland clans of a celebrated ointment, compounded of butter and brimstone; the third must have belonged to the Romish Church. He was a monk; this is proved by the frequent allusions to a “night in the cells” that follow his name.

“The Black Calendar” throws some light on the peculiarities of a few of my bold ancestors, who, like the knights of old, departed this life with their shoes on.

Coming down to more recent times, the Buckie editor

did not fail to make mention of a wealthy uncle, who never refused to put his hand in his old stocking when asked to. Strange that this uncle should always have been borrowing things from my family—a top-coat, a pair of boots, a flat-iron, or even the mangle. (Could this have been a pawnbroker?—*Editor.*) But then, great men have queer whims at times. And why shouldn't they? What would be the good of being a great man, if one couldn't do just as one liked?

That is all I know of my family history, but according to the editor of the *Buckie Observer*, you see before you the latest edition of the “gay Gordons,” small octavo, half-calf. I was captured on the iron-bound coast of Aberdeenshire, by the simple expedient of floating a grating in-shore from a man-of-war ship, with a basin of oatmeal porridge on it. After my capture, I was kept in a barrel, barred at one end, and fed on stirabout, and sent abroad in this fashion as a supernumerary. One day the surgeon of the ship turned his toes up, and this being reported to the captain—

“Oh!” said the captain, “is he now? Very well; write him down D.D.,* and open a fresh cask.”

And so I was hauled out to do duty instead of the D.D. doctor.

“Mr. Douglas,” said Captain Crisp, “we look to you now to aid in illumining the evening.”

“Ahem!” began the engineer, “if you don’t object to me reading my piece I’ll lay before you a bundle of ‘Clever Idiots.’”

CHAPTER VI.

CLEVER IDIOTS—THE SCOTCH ENGINEER'S TRUE STORY

"The world of fools hath such a store,
That he who would not see an ass
Must stay at home and bolt his door,
And break his looking-glass."

"**T**HE population of the British Islands," said Carlyle when asked, "is about forty-seven millions."

"Mostly fools," he added in that dry and vicious manner, which was characteristic of the man, when his dyspepsia drowned his politeness.

Whether he was right or wrong I shall not stop to inquire; with the fool generally or generically I have at present nothing to do. It is mine for the nonce to deal with a few particular fools, and to convince mine reader that my title is not quite so anomalistic as at first sight it may seem.

Of the genus *Stultus*, natural order *Anseres*, there are a very large number of varieties and sub-varieties from the individual who has a deficiency of twopence in his mental shilling, or who lacks a feather in his cerebral wing, down to the slavering idiot who sits at the manor gate expectant of the daily dole.

Stay, though, he does not sit there now in England; at all events, the law has provided for him, and found him a bed in an asylum or house of detention of some kind. But I'm not so sure but that in some remote parts of the Highlands of Scotland the wandering innocent is still to be met with. I remember one of these who, some years ago, was in the habit of roaming about the straths and glens of Inverness-shire. Although I believe that, judging from the shape of this fellow's cranium you could have put all his brains into an ordinary egg-shell, still he managed to live by his wits, and that is more than many

a wise man can do. His wants were few and simple, a stick to help him along the road and keep away the dogs, food, clothing of any kind, and shelter for the night. The stick he cut in the forest; shelter by night he found in byre or barn, or under a spruce tree or corn rick—shelter by day even from the rain he did not care to have, for the simple reason that the wetter and more miserable he appeared the more sympathy he elicited, and the more alms he obtained. I never knew this fool beg for a meal; he used to squat down in the ditch or at a gate where he could be seen, and rocking himself to and fro for a few moments, burst into the most dismal and distressing howlings and lamentations that it is possible to imagine. But a basin of porridge and milk or a bowl of soup and a bone to pick put an end to all this grief, and by-and-bye he got up and went on his way rejoicing. This man carried a "snuff mull," the *pulvis tabacci* being the only luxury he permitted himself, and it is needless to say that his box was kept well filled. He was an oldish man, and is probably now in the Better Land, and wiser far than any of us.

There used to be a species of the beggarman common in the Highlands, two of which in particular I remember. When a lad, I was living with a relation—a clergyman—for some time, and they used to visit there. They popped in "promiscous-like," as the sailors say, they were unbidden guests, but always made welcome. I hope I am not giving the reader the impression that these two gentlemen hunted in couple, because they did not; I am not sure that they were even acquaintances, but about once in six months V—— would come round and stay a week, and by-and-bye C—— would arrive, and *he* would stop a week or even more. Intelligent, shrewd fellows they were both, and both had taken honours at their university, and gone mad immediately afterwards. A little learning is a dangerous thing, but here were two men who seem to have had too much of it. Excellent mathematicians I was assured they were, and as far as the dead languages were concerned, wondrous linguists; to hear the one give recitations from the *Odyssey*, and the other from the *Æneid*, was thrilling.

These interesting idiots had about fifty houses in the Highlands that they visited periodically, but I believe they never out-stayed their welcome.

The old gaberlunzie who flourished in Scotland in the earlier portion of the present century, many strange stories of whom I have heard old people tell, was sometimes an idiot, but just as often quite the reverse. He was a contemporary of the ancient packmen, and as news did not fly with lightning speed in those days, these men would be always made welcome at farmers' kitchen firesides, if they had sense enough to show a fair face to the guid-wife, and spin a yarn to the guid-man. The packman was, of course, a man of business, the gaberlunzie a beggar by trade—and generally a right pleasant fellow from all accounts. He could sing a song as well as tell a story, so he never failed to keep old and young in glee. His bed was made in the barn on pea straw, or oaten straw, with any old "flawk" (plaid) for a covering.

"There he'd snore like a king till good broad day." Nor in the matter of food was he "ill to say to," as witness the words of the old song—

" Nae house, nae hame, nor hold had he,
But he was well likëd by every bodie,
And they gied him sunkets,* and saps to
pree," †

" A nievefu' ‡ o' meal, and a handfu' o' groats,
A daud § o' a bannock, or herring bree ||
Could porridge, or the lickings o' plates,
Would mak' him as blythe, as a beggar
could be."

The gaberlunzie was in the habit of blowing up as he neared the door of a dwelling, where he expected a welcome and good entertainment.

" His wallets ahint and afore did hang,
In as good order as wallets could be,
A lang kail-gully ¶ hung down by his side,
And a meikle nowt-horn ** to rout †† on had
he."

* Sunkets=left food. † Pree=to eat or taste. ‡ Nievefu'=handful. § Daud=large piece. || Bree=the water in which something has been boiled. ¶ Kail-gully=a horn spoon; it also means a knife. ** Nowt-horn=cow-horn. †† Rout—to sound.

By far the most illustrious of gaberlunzies that we have any account of in Scottish history, was King James V., the father of our bonnie Mary, Queen of Scots. He was a kind of "amateur casual" of the sixteenth century. Born in 1512, he did not "burn a long peatstack," for he succumbed in 1542. But if he had short life it was a merry one. Peace to his ashes, he was "a rantin', rovin', rhymin' billy." His greatest enjoyment was dressing himself as a beggarman and travelling through the land in search of adventures, which, when found, he duly made a note of, for he was a pawkie song-maker and poet. These adventures of his were not always pleasant, as, for example, when he found himself one terrible stormy night in a smuggler's cave, where being taken for a spy he was presented with a dagger on a plate in lieu of supper, and invited to perform *harri-karri* on himself. Instead, however, of plunging the knife into his own liver, he tried its edge on that of his host, then drawing his sword, he fought himself clear of the cave, and, being joined by his brave knights next morning—they were never very far away—he retraced his steps and made it hot for the troglodites.

He was a merry monarch, the very prince of gaberlunzies; a favourite "goak" of his was to billet himself on some farm, make himself frank and free and a favourite with everyone, and finally elope with the daughter. This was a bad return for hospitality.

Fancy the feelings of the farmer's guid-wife as embodied in the following verses written by the king himself:—

" She went to the bed where the beggar had lain,
The straw was cauld, and the begger was gane."

Of course, she jumped at once to the conclusion that the gaberlunzie hadn't gone empty-handed, so

" She ran to coffer and she ran to kist (chest),
But nothing was stolen that could be missed."

The guid-wife settled down after that, and sent the maid-of-all-work to "wauken her bairn."

" The servant went where the daughter had lain,
The sheets were unslept in, the lassie was gane.
Then back to her mistress she speedily ran,
Cryin'—' Your dochter's awa' wi' the beggar man.'"

It was true, ower true ; they were both off, and by that time miles upon miles away from the farm. There was racing and chasing, but all was in vain.

" Some rode upon horses, and some ran a-fit (on foot) ;
The guid-wife was mad, and out o' her wit ;
She couldna stand, and she couldna sit."

One is bound to feel sorry for the old lady, only accidents will occur occasionally.

About a hundred years before this, there was a kind of a plague of clever idiots in Scotland. They were more rogues than fools ; but so numerous did they become, and so daring were their depredations, that at last the law had to interfere for the protection of the public. It was enacted that these " feigned fools" should be caught and kept in prison at their own expense, with their legs in irons, so long as they had one bawbee to rattle on top of another. When the bawbees were done, the " fools" were nailed by the ears to a tree for a time, after which their ears were cut off entirely, or rather they were cut off from their ears, which were left on the tree by way of a caution to others. The earless " fools" were then sent " packing," and if they were found again, they were fastened to the tree again, but by the neck this time, and with nothing solid to stand upon.

In this way " feigned fools" were treated ; but the genuine article always obtained sympathy.

It could not be ascertained with certainty whether the wandering idiot was really a fool or a madman ; they were called " daft," therefore, and their daftness took droll turns at times.

A clever idiot of whom I have heard my grandfather speak obtained his livelihood in the following manner : He would call at a farmhouse, and, seating himself by the fire, bring out a bundle of papers.

" I find you owe me a thousand pounds," he would say, " and another thousand ; and it is too long due. I must have it."

"Certainly you shall," the guid-wife would reply ; "but, first and foremost, you must have your dinner."

A square meal never failed to bring this strange individual to his senses for the time being, and he would either take his departure or go contentedly to bed in the barn, as the case might be.

But the jokes these clever idiots used to perpetrate were not invariably of a harmless character, and the victims were just as often women as not.

There lived in an out-of-the-way moorland place in a northern county an aged crone who, although a regular church-goer, had not mastered the great truth that cleanliness is akin to godliness. She was most sparing in her acts of ablution, if not in those of her devotion. At her door, one beautiful summer's forenoon, was heard a knock, and on opening it, greatly to her horror, she saw before her one of the wandering idiots of the district. He was a man of gigantic build, hirsute and wild-looking withal, and carried in his hand a piece of timber taller than himself.

"Good morning," he said, walking in and taking a seat.

"Good morning, kindly," said the old crone.

"Put on a kettle of water."

"That I will," she said, "that I will gladly ; you'll be needin' a drop of brose, I daur say."

"Never mind," he grunted. "Get the kettle to boil quick."

While the old woman blew up the fire, the semi-maniac placed the washing tub in the middle of the floor with a piece of soap and the scrubbing-brush in it.

Obedient to orders, though with her heart in her mouth, the crone poured the hot water into the tub.

"Now," said the daft man, "I've never seen you before, but I've heard of you. It is quite true what they say ; you're a *dirty old besom*. Strip.

Disobedience meant death, and she knew it.

"Now you can mak' my brose," he said, after he had given her such a scrubbing as perhaps no old hag ever had before.

"And maybe," he added, "I'll find ye clean and tidy when I ca' round again."

I have heard my father talk of Feel Peter ("Feel" means daft or foolish in the Aberdeenshire dialect). He was also a powerful fellow, and like all the rest a wanderer. He was daft without a doubt, but he didn't like to be reminded of it, and if anyone wanted to rouse the demon in him he had only to call him Feel Peter. A farmer's wife, who had to cross the river Deveron before she got home, met him one evening in the gloaming just by the ford, but did not know him.

"Oh! man," she said, "I heard that Feel Peter is about, and I'm dreadfully feared that I may meet him."

"Indeed it is true," returned the maniac; "he is at this side o' the water; now the Deveron is deep the nicht, and so, if you like, I'll carry you o'er on my back."

The farmer's wife was most grateful, and mounted at once. Little did she know what was in store for her. The maniac waded into mid-stream, then stopping short, he gave the old lady a hoist that nearly shook the breath out of her.

"You said Feel Peter I think," he cried, giving her another hoist. "Well, I'll Feel Peter ye! You're on Feel Peter's back!"

At every second word he gave the poor old girl a hoist.

"You're upon Feel Peter—mad Peter—Feel Peter's back—Feel Peter—mad Perer—Feel Peter's back."

Then he pitched her off into the river and left her to find her way over as best she could.

"That's Feel Peter for you;" he said as he strode away.

As long back as I can remember there was a terrible being that used to roam in the moors and woods of Aberdeenshire. He might have been harmless enough, but I shall never forget meeting him once on a lonely road; my little sister was with me, and we both stood appalled as he strode past, bludgeon in hand, hardly seeming to see us, but muttering to himself:

"Mourikan—roum—roum—roum. Mourikan roum."

I've thought since that the words signified "American rum."

He was, I believe, one of the clever idiots who traded

on the terror he inspired in the breasts of those he visited, and in this way obtained an honest livelihood.

Female fools were not so common. I remember Dickie Da, however, and so may many others. She was a comical idiot of small dimensions who used to travel the road with a big woman who acted as her keeper. Dickie Da was said to be rich, or at least independent. We school children used to run after Dickie Da, teasing her until she glared like a veritable fiend, foamed at the mouth, and spat curses at us.

There was a being of the same description during my father's boyhood, called Jean Preen. Her the children used also to chase, singing—

"Jean Preen, Jean Preen,
The cat's among the cream,
Licking with her forefeet,
And glowering with her een."

I am not sure whether daft Jean Carr lived in my early days or not. I'm not aware that ever I saw her, but I have often listened to terrible tales of her doings from my nurse. I believe there is little doubts that in her day she stole and probably took the lives of several children. She was not a responsible being, and would therefore be forgiven. They said—with what amount of truth I am unable to vouch—that when she stole a child she nursed it for days, then, tying a bag of meal around its neck, flung it into the deepest "pot" or pool in the Deveron with the words—

"You have your supper, lodge where you like."

In many parts of Scotland, the village fool or village innocent is quite a handy sort of individual; he will herd geese, tend to fowls or cattle, run all kinds of errands, carry all sorts of messages or parcels, from a *billet-doux* down to a burden of wood, and is therefore a favourite with the old and young.

Last century it was considered quite the thing for every laird of any standing in the North of Scotland to retain a fool or clever idiot about his premises, or even to wait at table, where their comical and witty remarks raised many a hearty laugh among the guests.

An ancestor of mine, who lived in bygone times—ancestors generally do, by-the-bye—never sat down to dinner without both his fool and his piper in the room, and near his chair. This particular ancestor of mine suffered a slight inconvenience shortly after the fatal field of Culloden, in fact he lost his head, but I know a good deal of his home history, and his fool must have been a very clever person indeed. My ancestor's mother-in-law lived with him, and whenever she was more didactic than usual, he took refuge in the wit of his fool—a wink did it. Failing the fool, my lord would say to his piper—

“By the way, Donald, I heard a splendid strathspey the other day, it is called so-and-so, but I don't suppose you know it.”

“Och! doesn't she know it, then, whatefer?” Donald would reply. “Here she goes.”

And Donald would “blaw up,” and there would be an end to all argument for a time.

Verily pipers have their uses.

And so have fools.

Just a word or two about two other fools I knew once.

FOOL THE FIRST.

John Fraser wasn't a fool by any means, but he had a brother Willie who was. John himself was a millwright, and a strict and regular kirk attender. He had never been missed out of his pew, no, not once in twenty years; and this regularity, gained for him, at long last an eldership, just as his hair was turning grey. Now John had lived up to the age of forty and five, and had never yet thought of taking unto himself a wife. Mark you, up to this date, John was always seen at his work, and always like his work, in shirt sleeves, a little square paper hat, and the auld brown clay cutty was never once seen out of his mouth. Like Burns's Newfoundland dog, “the fient a pride, na pride had he.” But one day, in taking a short cut home through a heather moor, John “forgathered” with a lassie herding her cows. Bare-

headed was this lassie, barefooted and barelegged as well. John stopped to admire her. Never before, he thought, had he seen such a heather angel ; her blue eyes pierced him to the heart, her lips—crimson as the blossom of bilberries wet with dew—he fain would have kissed on the spot, and he even admired her innocent ankles, and couldn't for the life of him help observing they were beautifully rounded and white as marble. “By George,” said John to himself—and he was never known to swear a heavier oath—“how well she would look goin’ to the kirk wi’ me on Sunday.” I don’t think John felt the good of his pipe all the way home, though he pulled at it unmercifully. Well, to make a long story short, John married this bonnie herd lassie, and set her at the head of his board to admire, and in every way made much of her. Now the herd lassie, thus suddenly elevated, thought she couldn’t do better now she was a millwright’s wife, and consequently a real lady, than go in for gentility wholesale. Her idea of wholesale gentility was dress, dress, dress for herself, and dress for John, and a flower garden, and a gig to ride to the kirk in, and *bother the cutty pipe*. Ah! bother the cutty pipe indeed. Surely a man must love his wife if he gives up his tobacco to please her. John did. But I don’t think John was happy. He looked woful and ghostly, the paper cap was thrown aside in a corner, and he dared no longer appear at his work unless spruce and tidy. Poor John, gentility sat ill upon him ; he got thinner and thinner, never smiled at all, and his surtout coat, that he was married in, hung as loosely from his shoulders as if he’d been a scarecrow. I verily believe John would have died, if something hadn’t occurred that made a man of him again in a month. This was nothing more nor less than the birth—nine months after marriage—of a couple of lumping, thumping, fat babies. But, mind you, it wasn’t the twins so much that did the trick, although I don’t doubt he was proud enough of those ; but, you see, his wife had her arms full now, and couldn’t look after John, and I declare to you honestly that the twins weren’t two days old till John was back again at his work in his

shirt sleeves, paper hat and all, *and* the black cutty clay, all over smiles, and as merry as a mill wheel. Such is life. No, John wasn't a fool, but his brother Willie was. Not a downright born idiot, you know, but a "hafflin'" as such people are called. Nor was he bad-looking, but funny-like as I remember him, not unlike an improved edition of *Punch*, minus the hump. Kind-hearted he was too, and obliging, and so fond of children; would let us ride cockerty-koosie on his shoulders up and down the lea-rigs for hours at a spell, made teetotums for us to play for pins with on the winter's evenings, and on dark nights used to give us a sack of shavings to make a bonfire withal in the corner of a field; and Willie would dance with us round and round it, as delightedly as any of us.

Willie was the most extraordinary snuff-taker ever I met with in my life. The horn-mull was never out of his hand, and he used to ladle it up his nose—a good sized one—with a bone utensil as big as an ordinary salt spoon.

How many and many an hour have I sat by the burn-side with poor Willie, listening entranced to his wealth of old world stories, which lost nothing from Willie's queer way of relating them.

"Hang it" was a favourite expression of Willie's. It seemed to relieve his feelings, poor fellow, but it came out of his mouth with such charming emphasis that it really didn't sound badly. It is somewhat curious that wild birds, and even beasts, will often attach themselves to the half-witted, and of all creatures in the world, what should Willie have as a companion but an enormous heron. This heron followed him like a hen; it was like Willie's shadow, and you never met them apart. I don't think the heron had improved its position—it seemed always draggled and dilapidated. "Why, Willie," I said one day, looking at this melancholy bird, who was standing half-asleep in the shallow stream despairing of catching fish, "if I could fly like it, and had such great long legs, I would go away, away to big, big rivers, where I would be sure of a trout for breakfast."

There seemed even to Willie some sense in what I said. He gazed at the forlorn heron for some little time, then took a long pinch of snuff, and "Hang it, it's a fool," said Willie.

To my childish mind, the idea of a fool calling anything else a fool was slightly amusing.

Willie had a tabby kitten. This little puss used to come to our kitchen, fully persuaded it was more comfortable than its own. Willie always came to fetch it home, and the heron waited outside, but wouldn't come in. Now, we had an old cat who didn't like her fireside invaded, and she made a practice of thrashing the kitten viciously, but at every blow the wee pussy would only sing the louder. "Hang it," said Willie, "it's a fool."

One day Willie felt very ill, and the doctor was called, but never a spoonful of medicine Willie would take but snuff. "Man!" he told the physician, "I knew a man that took Epsom salts every mornin' o' his life, and twice on Sundays, and hang it he died for a that."

And so did Willie, clutching his friendly snuff-mull to the last.

FOOL THE SECOND.

Jamie Duncan was his name—a fool that a farmer kept. Found him very handy, too, among the cattle, you know. If he was a fool, he was a faithful fool. Whatever was entrusted to Jamie's care was as safe as if placed in the Bank of England. Not that they are in the habit of billeting cows in the Bank of England in time of peace, but never mind. A couple of young men met Jamie one night, driving home a cow from a distant market. "Let us see," said one to the other, "what Jamie will do if we pretend to steal the cow. I think," he continued, addressing Jamie, "we better have this cow." Instantaneous action suggested itself to the fool as the only way out of the difficulty; so, with the cudgel he carried, and without one word of warning, he made such a tremendous onslaught on the two acting thieves that he quietened them both so effectually that shutters had to

be procured to carry them home, and they left not their beds for weeks. "They were goin' to steal ma coo," Jamie explained, when he got home, "so I just slew them baith, as Cain slew his brother. Maybe Abel tried to steal Cain's coo. Wha kens?"

Jamie's love of tobacco was something quite out of the common. Give him a halfpenny to buy a bit of twist and you made him a friend for ever. For a stick of niggerhead, Jamie would have died for you. The farm where Jamie lived was faraway in the uplands of Aberdeenshire, and Jamie's fee for his services was plenty to eat and drink, and a penny a day; and the whole of his pecuniary earnings Jamie spent in tobacco. In the hamlet near the farm there were one or two shops, and in one of them tobacco might be bought; but Jamie dealt not there, and if asked his reason, "I dinna like the wifie," he would say, "and I dinna like her 'bacca, for I ken she damps it to mak it weigh, and Lord only kens what she damps it wi'. I put a bit in my mooth ae day, and Gory! I thocht I was pooshened. It fairly turned my stammach."

Now the shop to which Jamie carried his custom was no less than ten miles away. An ounce of tobacco cost Jamie threepence, so once in three days, winter and summer, as certain as sunrise, Jamie went trotting off to that shop after six o'clock in the evening, and was always back home again by midnight as fresh as a daisy. He never failed to impress upon the merchant that he "cam a' the way frae Lochee for an ounce o' tobacco," and doubtless he got good value for his money. I've often met Jamie of a summer evening trotting away for his morsel of tobacco. I think I see him now, tall, somewhat ragged, and ill shod, stubbly as to beard, which he trimmed with a pair of scissors, his bonnet pulled well over his ears, and a young tree in one hand two feet higher than himself.

There was a drunken soutar (shoemaker) lived not far from the village where Jamie bought his tobacco, a man like Tam O'Shanter, who "frae November till October, ae market day was never sober." Now about three miles

on Jamies' side of the bridge was a steep rocky ravine, spanned by an old Gothic bridge, and far down beneath was a brown river, which, even in fine weather, was ever in a state of fret and fume with the boulders that tried to bar its progress, but when swollen with the streams from the mountain sides, it tore along with the speed and force of a cataract. Returning as usual from the village one evening of a very rainy stormy day, Jamie found that the river had risen higher than ever it had been known to rise before, and had almost totally destroyed the bridge, having torn down one entire side and nearly the whole of the road, leaving only one parapet standing, and that seemed tottering. This parapet was barely a foot and a half wide, and of course higher in the centre. "Weel," said Jamie, eyeing it for a moment, "hame's hame, and ower I maun gang."

"Oh! Lord, I wish I were hame." Jamie looked speedily round, and there on a stone sat a queer-looking little figure, with a yellow leathern apron on.

"Wha the deil are ye?" said Jamie.

"Oh," groaned the creature, "I'm Tam the soutar, and the brig's washed awa, and I'll no get hame the nicht. Oh! me, oh! me, and when she does catch me she'll gie me a most terrible thrashin', she said she would."

"Ye're drunk, are na ye?" said Jamie.

"Oh, man, aye," replied the poor soutar, "I'm no only drunk, but I'm just fearfully fuddled."

"Can ye say truly rural?" said Jamie.

"Whisht wi' ye," said Tam, "I wadna even attempt it."

"Can ye stand on ae leg?" asked Jamie.

The soutar opened his eyes as wide as he could, and stared at Jamie in astonishment. "Stand upon ae leg!" he cried. "Lord! man, I can hardly stand upon the twa o' them. I've been drinking for a haill week."

"The more fool you," said Jamie, biting a bit off the end of his ounce of twist.

"What'll ye gie me," added Jamie, "to carry ye ower on my back?"

"Losh! man," said the soutar in some surprise, "wha are ye, at all at all?"

"I'm daft Jamie Duncan."

"Oh!" said Tam, settling down again, "I was sure ye were either the deil or a born idiot. Man alive! d'ye think I'd trust mysel on ony body's shouthers on the topo' that boolin', surgin', foamin' pot, ye gomril? Gae awa' wi' ye."

"A richt than," said Jamie, "please yoursel; I'm aff, for it'll soon be dark." And Jamie sprang lightly towards the dangerous parapet.

"Stop," cried Tam, "dinna gang and leave me, man. D'ye think ye really could carry me safely to the ither side on your back?"

"Just as sure as that the sun has gane down o'er the hill yonder," said Jamie; "as sure as that it'll be dark in half an hoor; as sure as that a water-kelpie 'll whip ye doon the burn if I leave ye sittin' on this stane."

"Weel, weel, then," said the unhappy Tam, "I'll just get up, and I maun try and think o' a bit prayer to say." As he spoke he mounted the stone somewhat unsteadily, and clambered thence on to Jamie's shoulders.

"Noo," said Jamie, as soon as he got him fairly up, "I'm no going to let you ride cockerty-coosie on my shouthers for naething, ye drunken auld deevil."

"Na, na," said the soutar, "I'll pay ye weel; I'll gie ye an ounce o' tobacco."

"That'll do," said Jamie; but the soutar didn't hear him adding "*so far.*"

Next moment Jamie had mounted the parapet, steadied himself a little, then took three or four steps forward on his perilous journey, when he suddenly stopped short.

"For God's sake gang on," cried the terrified Tam.

"I dinna budge anither step," said daft Jamie, "under twa ounces."

"Twa ounces, be it, then," quavered the soutar.

"I mean three," said Jamie.

"Four if you like. Oh! in mercy gang on."

And daft Jamie did "gang on," till he had reached the very centre and highest portion of the parapet. Here he came to a dead halt.

It must be admitted that the situation for both these fools was terribly appalling: it was gloaming even now,

almost night above, the maddened, foaming stream beneath, and the narrow foothold that seemed to totter and reel with their weight. But Jamie was firm.

"Never an inch out o' this do I move, back or fore, till ye promise me a pound o' the vera best niggerhead that can be gotten for love or money."

Perhaps the soutar had swooned, for he did not answer immediately.

"D'ye hear me?" cried Jamie, giving him a shake.

"Ah—h!" yelled Tam. "I'll gie ye ma whole fortune to gang on."

"Humph," grunted Jamie; "that's comin' to the point. I thocht I'd bring ye to your senses."

And slowly, slowly on went Jamie, and all the while the poor soutar was praying as he had never prayed before; praying as only the dying can pray.

Safe at last, and Jamie threw his burden most unceremoniously down on the grass.

Hardly had he done so when, with a noise like thunder, down went the remaining parapet of the bridge, almost burying them in foam and spray.

"Hech!" said Jamie, to the prostrate soutar, "ye didna mak' up your mind a minute ower soon."

"So that is my story," said the engineer, laying down his manuscript.

"As sure as I'm alive," said Ben, "I'll be dreaming about it all the night long. And what became of the pair of them at last? Did Tam, as you call him, pay the fine?"

"Jamie would have drowned him if he hadn't," replied the engineer. "But Tam's repentance didn't last long; he died a drunkard's death a year or so after it."

Well, in due time the bridge was repaired, and daft Jamie lived to make many hundred more journeys to the distant village for his modest ounce of twist.

But one dark, stormy winter's night poor Jamie came not home as usual. A search was instituted for him, and next day he was found lying stark and stiff, as dead as the inhospitable rock whose shelter he had courted.

"Very good indeed," said the captain, "and now then heave round, Mr. Mate."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MATE SPINS A YARN.

THE mate slowly sipped his coffee for a minute or more, looking into the fire between each mouthful, as if seeking for inspiration.

"It's a short yarn I'm trying to remember," he said at last. "There's maybe not much in it, but it was told me by an old shipmate, a Yank, like myself, and I'll try to give it in his own words."

"I guess it can't be much under twenty years, gentlemen, since I first cast anchor off old 'Frisco. It kinder makes an oldish man of me to say so; but speak the truth and shame the devil, as my paternal relative was wont to observe. 'Frisco warn't much of a place then, like it be now. There warn't none o' yer printing offices on a monstre scale, and there war a tarnation sight more mud-huts than palaces. I war then second mate o' the ship 'Duncan,' which warn't so dickie for a lad o' twenty-four. We were laden with rum, 'baccy, gunpowder, and blankets, and sich little articles as miners spend their dollars on. A rough lot these blooming miners were, too, but a sorter o' tender-hearted with all their hoss-play. Why, I recklect that fust night I went to the whiskey stores seein' a fellow down his man, and gouge his eye out in the twinkling of a turnip leaf; and, by gum, gentlemen, he walks up to his one-eyed friend next morning, just as cool and collected-like as a barrel of Greendyke oysters. 'Mebbee,' says he, 'yer won't believe me, ole man, but I do feel sorter sorry I started that eye o' yours.' 'Bah!' answers his chum, 'what matters one eye back or fore; here, old pard, give us yer hand. Neow, what'll yer drink?'

"Well, the more I went on shore the more I wanted to go, so it ain't much of a wonder that in less than three.

weeks I war down with the yellow fever, and the 'Duncan' had sailed without me. Now, if you're thinking of yellow Jack and black vomit, I guess you're a bit out. It was nothing of the sort, I tell ye, the only similitood of my fever to yellow Jack was thirst, not for water or wine either, you bet, but for gold. That was about the natur of my complaint just then.

" Well, my friends, in those days there warn't the same convanience for travellling in them parts there is now. Railways warn't dreamt of. Bullock waggons were a treat that very few could pay for ; so, ye see, most of us had to rough it. But, bless you, I didn't mind that then, and I guess I wouldn't mind it yet.

" I jined a party that war going farther north and east than anybody had been yet. There were six of us, and we were to be pardners in everything. We were well armed, and just carried about everything with us that miners had any use for.

" We started fair, and in less than a week we were clear away from civilisation, and all alone in mountain and forest. No, not quite all alone, for there were many an ugly grizzly to encounter, and many a tarnation red-skin, which we soon got to hate worse nor spotted snakes. But one skunk that we caught one night a-creeping around our camp we were just a-going to kill and scalp ; not that we cared a pin about his dangable dirty wig, but scalping is the custom, and kinder strikes terror into the hearts of the Injuns. We were about to do for this un, when Rodgers, one of our pards, says, says he :

" ' Why, he says, ' look here, boys, may I never smoke another pipe if this derned red-skin ain't a-wearing a necklace of nuggets.'

" And I tell you, gentlemen, our precious eyes did sparkle a trifle when we hauled the dusky devil to the light and saw it ; every one war as big as your thumb, there were twenty-one in all, and about as many bears' teeth between them. Wall, I reckon we robbed that wretch precious quickly ; but we didn't scalp him. No ; we fed him well and gave him rum, and, what with signs and what with a smattering o' Injun, we let him under-

stand he war to lead us to the gold-fields. And the very next morning this skunk begs for more rum, then signs us to follow him. No, we wern't a bit afraid. Rodgers knew them chaps well, and he kept patting the rum bottle all day and signing to the red-skin to get along, and now and then he would give him a smell of it, or maybe a taste.

" We sort of blazed our way along for several days, for we found it easier to fire the bush than scramble through naterel-like. On the fourth day we came to a gulch, and a stream ran through the valley ; and I could tell at once, by the excited eyes of my pardners, that we'd got to the land o' gold at last. And it warn't long, either, till Mr. Red-skin was down on his knees, scraping away among the broken quartz like iverything, and by-and-bye he comes in with a nugget, and gits a 'llowance o' rum.

" ' Hurrah, boys ! ' cries Rodgers. ' This here is our camping ground. Here's where we've got to make our fortunes in six months' time.'

" Fear of the red-skin ? No. If we hadn't had plenty o' rum he might have run off, and brought his whole yelling tribe to scalp us ; but I niver saw the Injun yet would run far away from a rum bottle.

" Wall, we were in roaring luck for once, and at the end of one month we had made a considerable pile, and the claims we worked still held out.

" But, gentlemen, wherever you find carrion you will find corbies, and if they ain't there jus then, they won't be long o' coming. So one day strangers began to arrive, Yanks and Irish Mexicans, by the score. We couldn't keep 'em back. O' course not ; but it did feel vexing. There seemed plenty of gold, however, to last all comers till doomsday ; and just in three months there were quite a village all around us and several stores, where you could buy most anything, from a blanket to a bottle of rum."

Here the mate paused for a minute or more. I never saw him so long filling his pipe before nor since, and I'm sure everyone could hear the great sigh he emitted when he resumed his yarn.

"Gentlemen," he continued, "it war at one o' them stores I lost my heart. A few young girls *had* found their way to the Red Gulch with their parents, but there warn't nary a one o' them fit to hold the candle to my Katie M'Guire. I can see her now, the darling, as I first saw her serving out rum—her hair was just the colour of it—to a parson, and smiling so tarnation sweetly that my heart, eviry ounce of it, went straight away to her on the spot. She war the landlord's daughter, jus new come to the gulch. Tall, fair-skinned, blue-eyed, a bit freckled about the nose, but a warmer-hearted wench there warn't a 'tarnation bit o' use for. She war a good armful, I tell ye, too; and no one dared make too free wi' Katie, or, as cartain as sunrise, they got a wanner straight from the shoulder. Queer kind o' a parson that one war, too, I tell ye. A regular down-south lookin' chap, long chafeted, watery-eyed, thin, and buttoned-up like, and all the blood in his body were stationed in his nose. And warn't he spooney on my Katie, you bet? Now, the funniest thing about this critter war this. Soon's he took to drinkin' rum he guv up 'baccy slap-bang, all at once jest. Should guess his 'llowance o' liquor war about a bottle a day, bitters in the morning, and a dose to go to sleep upon at night.

"Wall, this cuss, soon's he guv up the pipe, or maybe two or three weeks arter, took the queerest disease of the eyes iver I hearn of. Why, our doctor himself 'llowed he'd be teetotally derned, if ever he'd seen anything like it. Bar that his eyes war a bit boiled-like as to the blue part, and bar that the whites looked like curried onions, and bar that them blessed optics o' his always ran water when he looked at Katie, there seemed nothing wrong with him. Sometimes he war a sorter right enough, at others everything *far away seemed close at hand*, and *vice versa*. This war a sorter awkward for his reverence, to say the least of it, and he jest behaved as like a madman as ever you seed in your born days. He never went abroad without a Derringer; but, as somebody had always drawn the charge, it considerably reduced the danger. Well, I've hearn o' many com-

plaints that the giving up of 'baccy brings about, but this illness of the parson chap's was the old-firedest out. Why, dear me, mates, but he'd let drive at a fly not five yards ahead of him, and think he war a-shooting an eagle a mile off ; and if he did spot an eagle half a mile off, he'd take it for a wasp, and wave his hands around his head like a sixpenny model of a windmill. Ole Twist's donkey he always took for a hare, and it gave him rare sport, I can tell ye. The only sensible thing about the chap was his falling in love with my Katie, but he always thought she war quite a long distance away from him. 'Thou art so near and yet so far,' he would say, muzzling over the bar at her.

" Wall, he told every soul in the gulch, it war the love o' Katie as war making him so thin. Every soul knew it war the brandy and the want of 'baccy.

" I married Kitty, and we took a store in the dear old gulch, and maybe the best customer we had war this mad parson. Try to cure him ? I should think we did ; and we offered him weeds that would have lured the larks from the sky. The cuss wouldn't have them.

" Wall, mates, the poor wretch got thinner and thinner, and skinnier and skinnier every day, till there war nothing left but the hide to hold the bones in position. Then he took to his bed. And there warn't a soul in the gulch hat didn't do all they could for him. He lived in a bit of a hut about half a mile from Katie's-and-my store ; and nobody was a bit surprised when, one windy, wet night, the doctor looked in to have a drop of summit hot, and told us that he had just left the parson, sinking fast, and that he couldn't live two hours. That war true, mates ; but he didn't die in bed ; for the doctor hadn't quite done talking when the door opens, and in walks his patient.

" I ain't much of a hand, boys, at describing death, but it were imprinted on every inch of that poor mad parson. His high cheek-bones, his glittering eye, his wet clothes hanging loose about his shrinking frame, his thin, bony hands more like birds' claws, and his deathly, quavering voice. 'Twar a sight I'll never forget. He sank into a

chair by the fire, and Katie hastened to make him brandy hot, and the dear girl held it to his lips, for he couldn't. But he sucked it down. 'I see straight now, Katie,' he said. 'You are near me now. But I couldn't die in bed, all by myself—you know—Bless you, Katie—Give me a cigar—Light it, light it—Bless you.'

"He clutched the weed, and lifted it towards, not *to* his mouth. 'Twar too late. The arms fell, jaw and head dropped chestwards, and there war no more of that poor parson chap.'

* * * * *

That very night a change came over the spirit of the scene. It came on the wings of a southern wind, in the shape of a dark mist, that gradually spread itself over the sky, and for the first time for many days the sun was overshadowed. Fresh snow, too, began to fall, and at the same time strange sounds, musical and murmuring, were heard all about and around us. Every iceblock in all the pack began to lift up its voice, as if longing, wishing, and yet hoping soon to be free. The breaking up of the great sea of ice was at hand. Next day we observed, about a mile astern of us, a long rent in the pack, stretching from N.E. to S.W. Sometimes it would open for two or three yards, and again it would slowly close. How eagerly we watched the tantalising motions of this canal ; our whole hopes were concentrated on it. If it opened, we had a chance of getting away out into the free ocean. If the reverse should occur, however, and at the same time frost and an under-current set in, we might in all probability be drifted away towards the west land of Greenland, and have to remain in these dismal latitudes for many months, perhaps for ever.

Next morning, what had been but a canal the day before had increased during the night to a large lake. Birds, too, were flying about it, and the narwhal and porpoise came up to breathe and sun themselves on its placid bosom. Every heart on board was gladdened, and every eye was bright with joy ; nor was it owing to the glass of grog to all hands alone that they left the ship

singing to proceed to the lake, their object being to hew a canal from it to the vessel in order that we might get her out into the water. This, although the hardest work that could be performed by men's hands, was executed most satisfactorily after many, many hard hours' toil and fatigue. The men worked with the great ice-saw, and blasted the bigger blocks with powder. The large pieces of ice had to be pushed along to the open water, and the smaller bits were sunk below the main pack. When the natural spirits of the crew began to flag, they were stimulated by the exhibition of artificial ditto, and when they lost heart they generally found it again in the heart of a bottle of rum; so that, at last, we had the satisfaction of seeing our gallant barque under weigh, sailing slowly down the lake. Having upwards of a hundred miles to work our vessel through before reaching clear water, we did not yet dare to ship our rudder, and a few hands pulling a boat ahead of her sufficed to steer her.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLACK MEN'S BALL, AND WHAT IT LED TO.

NEXT Friday found us all together again as usual. We had not yet let down our hearts, however. We were a well-fortified, well-provisioned ship, and there were long months of summer yet before us.

The captain was not below when the sea-pie came in. He was in the Crow's Nest, having one last look round for "ferlies," as Douglas called wonders.

"Come along, Captain Ben," cried the mate, as he came trotting down the stair. "I knew you'd sniff it."

The captain took off his gloves, smiled, and rubbed his hands; then we all settled down to serious eating.

"Robert," cried our bold skipper to the steward, as he handed a monstre plate of pie down to the observant bright-eyed Newfoundland, "Robert, have the men forward had their grog?"

"Yes, sir, they've spliced the main-brace. At least they're splicing at it now, and seem all as happy as sand boys."

"Well, then, after the men come the masters. Bring in the coffee and fixings, as Mr. Smartie here calls them."

"Now light your pipes."

"Whose turn is it first?"

"It doesn't matter who begins," said the doctor.

"Will you yourself?"

"I don't mind that even. I shall call my yarn

THE BLACK MEN'S BALL."

Luncheon, or "tiffin," as we called it, was always a free-and-easy sort of a meal on board the Penguin. Dyspepsia was a thing practically unknown in our mess. If ever the cassowary suffered from that complaint, so did we. And a little before one o'clock more than one of us began to feel hungry—hungry with a healthy hunger, not born of beer or nips of Highland whiskey—a hunger that we weren't ashamed to own to. Even Paymaster Pumpkin would rub his hands as he walked briskly up and down the ward-room floor, and

"Positively, gentlemen," he would say, "I'm beginning to feel peckish. Ah, here comes the steward to lay the cloth. Now then, young Sawbones"—this was the irreverent way he chose to address me—"clear away those papers. And you, Mr. Soldier, away with your painting; no more sketching or scribbling either till after luncheon."

I daresay that a good deal of the schoolboy sticks to men in after life. Anyhow, no sooner was the cloth laid than everybody suddenly got as lively as bees on swarming-day. Books were pitched on one side, and conversation waxed animated in the extreme; and

when, at last, the servants marched into the mess-room, trencher-laden, there was a general chorus of—

“ Hurrah! Now then, boys, sit in !”

Nobody needed an invitation. There was a general scramble for chairs, and we seemed to settle around that table as swiftly as swallows in a bed of osiers.

But tiffin was not only a free-and-easy meal, it was likewise the business meal. If a general invitation had been sent to the officers of the ship for a ball or a dinner, it was decided at tiffin who were to go and who were to stop at home. If we were to give a hop on board, the distinctive merits of vinous refreshment or a high tea were discussed at the luncheon-table; if we were to challenge the Bombay Plungers to a cricket match, or the Madagascar Water Rats to a boat race, or the Portuguese Pee-shooters to a rifle-match, it was decided during the progress of the mid-day meal when and where the great events should come off; to say nothing of all general mess arrangements, and such tiny matters as who were going on shore for the afternoon, and what was to be done when we went there, *et cætera, et cætera*.

“ That Irish stew is delicious,” said Pumpkin one day, passing his plate to the servant for another load. “ Delicious! I really begin to feel better already. Penny, bring me a glass of Vermouth. Gentlemen, what do you think is the news from the office this morning?”

It should be stated that the admiral of the station had sailed only the day before. He was one of those officers who was said to have a zeal for the service. At all events, he never paid us a visit without issuing an order of some kind.

“ Tell us,” some of us cried, while the remainder listened all attention.

“ Guess,” said Pumpkin.

“ Ashleigh has been promoted?”

“ Penguin ordered home?”

“ Sawbones to be translated?”

“ Ne'er a one of you is right,” said Pumpkin. “ Come, I won't keep you in tig-tire. I'll tell you. We are going to have a new mess-mate.”

“ A new mess-mate?”

"Yes," continued the paymaster. "Oh, don't be surprised; he is only an additional, only a supernumerary, only lent to us—and he is only a soldier."

After digesting this long string of "onlies," we felt relieved; for we did think, for a time, that some one of us was to be ordered home to make a vacancy.

"Only a soldier, is he?" said our captain of marines. "Thank you, Pumpkin. But where is he going to sleep? I daresay you'll give him your cabin, Pumpkin, and take to a hammock."

The idea of little fat Paymaster Pumpkin, with his round, round face, and his bald billiard-ball of a head, swinging in a hammock, made us all laugh.

"Nothing of the sort, Captain Stanley," replied the wee man, somewhat loftily. "He is more in your line than in mine."

"Oh, but, paymaster," said the marine officer, soothingly, "you must dispose of him decently, you know, come! Have the captain to build a cabin for him on the main-deck."

"A likely thing, indeed!" said the first lieutenant, putting in his oar, "and spoil the look of the whole main-deck! Not if I'm consulted on the matter."

"Besides," added Pumpkin, refusing to be mollified, "I said he was *only* a soldier, and, I may add, he is only a griffin. Lieutenant Crook—by your leave, Royal Marine Light Infantry—hardly knows the colour of deep water, and hasn't been a dog's watch in the service. Cabin? No; a hammock and a screen-berth on the main-deck—that'll be Crook's form."

"And," said the first lieutenant, "I'll see that that screen-berth is taken down every morning before seven bells."

"You've made up your mind, then, to be down upon poor Crook?" said Stanley.

"Down on poor Crook!" repeated Smarte; "not a bit of it; only I do look upon the man as a mere innovation. What do we want more marine officers for, I wonder?"

"Well, gentlemen," said Pumpkin, "as he is a mere supernumerary, of course we'll charge him a shilling more a day for his mess."

This was put to a division, and the ayes had it. Pumpkin had a quick ear for the jingle of coin—a lively look-out for "bawbees." All for the good of the mess, of course; but still some of the motions he brought forward and carried at the tiffin-hour the younger members of the mess thought a trifle hard. For instance, if anyone happened to break a glass, he was put down "six to one for skylarking." Oh, but you ought to have heard the laughing and shouting round the table that day when Pumpkin himself accidentally smashed a tumbler—the first that had been broken since his order became law.

"Six to one," was the cry, "six to one, six to one for skylarking! Down with it, steward!"

"But, gentlemen, gentlemen!" Pumpkin protested; but it was all in vain. Out came the steward's tablets, and it was duly chronicled, "Paymaster Pumpkin, six tumblers—six to one for skylarking."

Lieutenant Crook, R.M.L.I., arrived in good time. He landed at Zanzibar from the admiral's tender—a saucy morsel of a gunboat that was everlastingly on the move, doing all the dirty work for the big ship, and catching slavers right and left; the prize-money that accrued from such service being duly shared with the admiral, captain, officers, and crew of the flag-ship, which was hard, to say the least of it, on the fighting tender.

One would have thought that young Crook, the griffin, the innovation, the man with such a string of "onlies" round his neck, ought to have felt a very humble individual indeed. But he did nothing of the sort. He was the most cool and self-possessed individual ever I came across in the service.

Good-looking was Crook withal, *ætat* 25; fair hair and moustache, and a delicate pink-and-white complexion. He was every inch a soldier. The reader must kindly understand me to mean that there wasn't an inch of the sailor about him. He ordered the servants about as if he had been in an hotel; he made a kind of a spoiled child of his own particular servant, and didn't keep him in his place; he called the steward "waiter," his screen-berth his "bedroom;" he talked of going

"upstairs;" and, in fact, exhibited the utmost indifference to nautical phraseology and the customs of the service. He called the first lieutenant "old fellow" before he had been three hours in the mess; he "digged" Pumpkin in the small ribs on the evening of the second day; and on the Sunday forenoon he was positively seen walking arm-in-arm with the captain himself on terms of as much familiarity as if he'd been his own father. He was really an innovation; but his smile was so pleasant, and everything he did or said so evidently the outcome of a happy and innocent nature, that nobody could be angry with him; so before very long he was a general favourite.

Poor Pumpkin, though, before the arrival of Crook, used to have a nap in the easy chair, with his handkerchief on his hat, just after dinner. There was no chance of enjoying any such luxury after Crook joined, except on the evenings when the innovation betook himself on shore.

Our young soldier was not long with us before he gave ample proof to most of us that if there was one thing in the world that he was fonder of than another it was practical joking. And there was no end to it, either. It was harmless enough, however. There was never much mischief done, and the business always concluded with a good laugh.

But before a month had passed a practical joke of some kind had been perpetrated on every single one of us—Crook being the perpetrator, we being the perpetratees.

One particularly warm day four of us were quietly smoking our cigars under the quarter-deck awning. We were lying at anchor close abreast of Zanzibar. Crook had gone on shore, as usual, with the after tiffin boat, and, as usual, in shooting rig, with gun and bag; not that there was much of any consequence to shoot, but he'd bring off something, dead or alive—birds or snakes, a monitor lizard, a monkey, or a mongoose.

We had, as a pet, an enormous ape or ourang, which, as a rule, preferred walking upright; and, dressed as he always was in blue swallow-tailed coat of serge, red baize

breeches, and a woollen Tam o'Shanter with a red top, it must be confessed that Daddy, as we called him, looked a strong link in the Darwinian chain. Crook and he were great friends ; the ape would refuse nothing the young soldier offered him, and would even try to smoke to please him.

"What do you think," said I, "did I find in my fiddle this afternoon?"

"Don't know," was the half-sleepy answer.

"It was filled with gigantic cockroaches ; there must have been five hundred in it. As soon as I commenced to play they came rushing out of the *ff* holes, went tumbling over each other towards the shoulder, and then flew away for all the world like a flock of wild pigeons. The air was darkened with the brutes for the space of five minutes."

"I don't wonder, Sawbones," said Pumpkin, who had about as much ear for music as an Alderney cow, "I don't wonder at your playing creating a kind of a panic among the congregation, nor at their rushing madly to the *ff* holes, as you call them ; the only wonder is how Crook—for, of course, it was Crook—got all these cockroaches boxed up in your fiddle."

"Oh," cried Watkins, "that was simple enough ; he only had to pop a piece of butter inside, and set the fiddle in a corner. But what do you think I found in my boot this morning ?"

"Don't know."

"Why, I declare I never got such a fright in my life. The boot wouldn't go on ; and when I held it upside down, out dropped a lively young cobra, and went scuttling away under my drawers. When I taxed Crook about it he only laughed, and said, "Your toes were safe enough, old fellow ; I drew the fangs."

Just at the moment up came our worthy Scotch engineer, fuming. He was fuming far too much to talk decent English.

"Whaur's the furst livtenint ?" he cried ; "whaur is he ?"

"Why, what *is* the matter ?" we all enquired.

"What's the maitter!" roared McGregor; "why, maitter eneuch, man, maitter eneuch for a court o'inquiry; maitter eneuch for a coort-mairshal. The service is goin' to the mischief. I'll report that young Crook before I'm twa hoors aulder, or may I never chew cheese again! Whaur's the furst livtenint, I'm askin' ye?"

"But what has Crook done? Tell us, McGregor."

"I'll not trust mysel' to speak," said the worthy Scot, "till I licht my pipe! Now," he continued, taking vicious draws at the clay, "I'll tell ye what he's done, and I think ye'll every one o' ye agree wi' me that that young scoundril Crook deserves to be"—puff—"planked"—puff—"drum-headed"—puff—"cobbed, and keel-hauled. I wint to my cabin just now to have a caulk, and I found my bed was already okopied!"

"By whom?" said Watkins; "this is interesting."

"Why, by Daddy, gentlemen, as drunk as a lord; Daddy in my bed, in under the sheets"—puff—"with his head on the pillow"—puff—"snorin' drunk, with my meerschaum in the jaws o' him"—puff, puff—"with my specs on his nose, and my nicht-cap on his ugly head"—puff, puff, puff.

We all agreed it was time that something should be done. Reporting him would be mean, cobbing and keel-hauling was out of the question; he must be paid out in his own coin.

"I have it!" cried I.

"Out with it, then!" cried McGregor joyfully. "Gather roond the doctor, gentlemen; dinna speak loud, doctor, but out wi' it, man!"

"Well," I continued, "I met old Bumboat Sulliman yesterday, and he told me there was going to be a black-man's ball at Boobooboo to-morrow night. Now, you know how Crook hates to go on shore in uniform; so if we could only get him to go on shore in full dress to this niggers' hop, why, we should have the whip hand of him for the rest of the cruise."

Poor Crook never looked nicer nor happier than he did that evening, when he entered the ward-room before dinner, all gold, and scarlet, and smiles. We were

talking about the grand ball to which we were invited. We showed Crook the "invite," a gaily be-ribboned piece of parchment from "Ab del Raman Sulliman." Crook was delighted.

"Bother the dress part of it, though!" he said; adding presently, "Never mind. Will there be many nice girls there?"

"Sure to be," said Watkins.

Fortune seemed to favour us. Next day, at luncheon, we heard Crook giving orders to Brown, his servant, to take his sword and dress-case on shore.

"I'll dress on shore," he explained, "and get a boy to guide me to Boobooboo. Shan't come off to dinner; I'll have a snack at Portugee Joe's, and join you afterwards at the ballroom."

This was enough for us. We let Private Brown into the secret, and commissioned him to bribe Portugee Joe not to let the cat out of the bag, and to provide a guide that couldn't speak a word of English.

We anticipated fine fun, I can assure you. Ab del Raman, we had assured Crook, was the Sultan's head chief, and the ball would, therefore, be simply a splendid affair. The boat was called away at seven o'clock, and at half-past seven we had all—*dressed in mufti, of course*—landed at Boobooboo; and there was Sulliman himself, in his bare black legs and long cotton gown, all ready to guide us through the bush to the black-man's ball.

It was held in a kind of hall, an immense barn of a place, lighted up with oil-lamps, which gave it the appearance of a kind of second-class hippodrome.

But the scene inside beggars description. The mere spectators lined the walls three or four deep; the dancers—semi-nude savages every one of them—danced in a wide circle round the musicians, the men waving aloft torches and spears, the women bending up and down, beating horn cymbals, rolling their eyes, and tossing their arms around them, and ever and anon shrieking like so many mad curlews, till they silenced even the scream of the Arab clarionet and roll of the horrid tum-tum.

We hadn't been spectators of this wild scene for over five minutes, when in marched Crook, in all the glory of his splendid uniform, and laughing outright.

"By George!" he cried, coming up, "you fellows have fairly sold me! Ha, ha, ha! I give in, but I really didn't think there was so much in you."

Suddenly, as if by magic, music and dancing ceased; there was a fanfare of trumpets heard outside, then in rushed a dozen gesticulating Arabs.

"Sameela, sameela, sameela!"* they cried, and led the way to a raised dais that we had not previously noticed. It had a railing in front; steps led up to it, and it was covered with scarlet cloth. Two sedan-chairs were borne towards it, and the occupants descended and took their places.

Evidently some Arab prince and retinue; his jewelled turban and sword-belt denoted his rank; his long white hair and beard gave him a patriarchal look; and his green cloak of camel's hair showed him to be a scion of the Prophet.

Not on the wealthy Arab, but on his daughter, were all our eyes riveted.

"Good Heavens! what a lovely girl!" we heard Crook mutter. "Wonders will never cease!"

It seemed not, indeed, for five minutes had hardly elapsed when we noticed the prince, or chief, who had evidently come to the ball for amusement, talking to an Arab attendant, and waving his hand in our direction.

Next moment this attendant stood salaaming before us. Nay, not exactly before us, but before Crook.

"His Excellency," he said, in good English, "begs the British officer will do him the honour to take a seat by his side."

You ought to have seen the look of triumph Crook gave us as he marched off with his great sword clanking behind him, and was beckoned smilingly to a seat close to the chief and that beautiful girl, evidently his daughter.

We noticed the chief, too, wave his hand towards us,

* "Clear the way!"

as he made some remark to our gallant young soldier, and smile as he received his reply. We knew, then, the tables were completely turned upon us ; and when, about twenty minutes afterwards, the Arab attendant returned, and made the following speech, we did think that Crook was making the best of his position, and adding insult to injury :

"The honourable the British officer," said the Arab, "bids me say there is no need for his servants—you fellows—to wait. He will go home to coffee with his Excellency."

How we fumed ! We felt sick of the ball, and sorry we had come. Crook was doing his best to entertain the chief, and successfully too. And the glances of admiration he was receiving from the old man's beautiful daughter made us bite our lips with envy. When we couldn't stand it any longer, we went off in a body, laughing heartily, however, at having fallen into the pit we had dug for Crook. We had a stiffish pull for it off to the Penguin, for it had come on to blow a bit. The boat was manned only by ourselves ; for, not knowing how late we might be, we hadn't cared to bother with a crew. I was coxswain. Pumpkin had the bow. He was the only one in the boat who growled at our late escapade.

"All your fault, Sawbones," he muttered, when about half-way off. "Your fault entirely."

At that very moment we shipped a sea, and Pumpkin got the sharp end of it on his neck.

"Confound it all, Sawbones," he cried, "you did that on purpose!"

"Quite right, paymaster," I replied coolly ; "it's a mere exchange of civilities."

Pumpkin was silent for the rest of the time.

Next morning, Crook was in the captain's cabin. We could see them—ay, and hear them ; they were both laughing like all possessed, and we knew Crook was giving a brilliant account of the black-man's ball.

That same forenoon the captain asked us, in his dry sly way, and with a merry twinkle in his eye,

"How did you enjoy yourselves at the ball, gentlemen?"
And we had to reply,

"Oh, very much. It was great fun!"

Now comes the serious ending to the story of our new messmate, which I will relate as briefly as possible, for it is by no means a sunny memory. From the very night of the ball Crook seemed in many ways a changed man. He gave up practical joking entirely; he did not laugh so much as of yore; indeed, he was often silent and *triste*. He was a great deal on shore; and, on the whole, it was evident to every one of us that Crook was in love. Once or twice we attempted to banter him on the subject, but, as he did not take it kindly, we desisted.

We had lain much longer at Zanzibar than we expected we should; but at last came the orders from the Admiral to weigh anchor. We were to run down to Madagascar with despatches, and then on to the Cape, and thence again right away up to Bombay.

We were to sail at two o'clock on a Tuesday. How well I remember it! A thunderstorm had been raging all the forenoon, the clouds were still black and threatening over the city, and against them the palace of the Sultan looked as white as marble, with the blood-red flag drooping against its mast, and ever and anon the forked lightning glancing and quivering around the square and massive towers.

I had work to do in the sick-bay, and was busy writing there, when a big gun was fired right overhead, and presently another, and some time afterwards a third. I sent my servant on deck to find out what the firing was about.

He returned almost immediately to say that Lieutenant Crook had not come off, and that the guns were merely signals for his recall. At that very moment something seemed to whisper to me and to tell me that poor Crook would return to us no more. I had not the slightest hope of his reappearance from the very first, and I said as much to my messmates, though I could assign no reasons.

We stopped at Zanzibar all the week, but search was

unavailing. The chief and his beautiful daughter had sailed a week before, but no one knew where he had gone—some said Mocha, others Madras.

Had Crook followed them? or had he been foully murdered? We never knew. He was marked in the log as “Lost,” not “Run;” and his fate is a mystery until this day. He took nothing with him, not even his letters or keys, nor even his purse, which, as was his habit, he left in his servant’s care.

Here is a strange circumstance well worth noting: Daddy, the ape, never touched food again after we steamed away from Zanzibar; and one morning he was found stark and stiff in the very corner of the main-deck where poor Crook’s cot used to swing. Must there not have been something good about a man that even an ape so loved?

And now Captain Benjamin Crisp the ball is with you—the ball of spun-yarn.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTAIN TELLS A FEW SMUGGLING YARNS.

“**T**HE doctor,” said Captain Ben, “has spun us a true yarn. Now, fact, like fever, is catching, so I’ll try and follow his example. What say you to a smuggling anecdote or two?”

“Hear, hear.”

“The wisest man the warld e’er saw,” began the Captain, “says”—

“‘ Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret places.

“ If you are at sea, sweltering, perhaps, under a tropical sun, and on short allowance of water; if, while serving the water out, the quarter-master happens to turn about his back for a minute or two to swear at the cook, and you help yourself in the meantime to a mugful on the

sly—that, I can assure you, will seem the sweetest draught ever you imbibed in your life.

"I don't know about the bread, but commend me to a pipe smoked in secret places. On board ship, as I dare say the reader knows, no smoking is allowed after a certain hour at night, and what sailor has not experienced the delight of a pipe on the quiet, and after hours. My cabin in the saucy '*Thunderspell*' seemed just cut out for smoking *sub rosa*, being fitted with a nice little port, which could be opened in almost all weathers. Here a few of us officers used to assemble of a night, and, with closed door and drawn curtain, offer up a burnt sacrifice to the Nicotian deity. We used to be very glad when the sentry outside on the main deck was a man with badly-developed nasal sinuses. But this wasn't always the case. Private Flannigan, I remember, was a man with wonderful powers of scent. When he happened to be doing 'sentry go' seldom were our pipes well under weigh before his tip-tap was heard at the door. Next moment he was grabbed, and hauled bodily inside, and the door re-closed. 'It's all roight, gentlemen,' Flannigan would say, as he polished off the half-tumblerful of rum filled out for him, 'I thought I felt the smell av smoke, but bedad me nose decaived me.' Sometimes this man had the audacity to 'feel the smell av smoke' and have his rum repeated twice in one evening.

"We were officers, you see, and *we* weren't found out, but this same Flannigan reported Bob Carter, an able seaman, whom he discovered burning a light, smoking a pipe, and having a feed. Bob was brought before the captain on the quarter-deck next day. Now, the captain was a pompous man, and severe, and one who mouthed his English tremendously.

"'Now, sir,' he said, looking his very sternest at poor Bob, 'I hear, sir, you have been having—having, sir—*nightly orgies*, sir.' N.B.—You should never use big words to a sailor. Honest Bob was out of his soundings.

"'Well, sir,' he replied, giving a scrape with one leg and a touch to his forelock, 'if you likes to call 'arf a box of sardines a nightly orgie, then I did have a nightly orgie.'

"But Bob had three water grog for a month for his little smoke.

"*Apropos* of smoking on the quiet, I'll tell you a story. There is a certain personage in this country who, if he lives and continues to be as good a boy as he has been of late, will one day be very much more exalted than he is now. Well, this personage dearly loves a smoke, and once upon a time, when he was returning from abroad in a ship of war, he used to long for a pipe after hours, and, longing, betake himself to the junior surgeon's cabin, and, in company with this officer, would smoke out of the port, aye, and enjoy the stolen pipe, too, just as much as you or I or any common mortal would, reader. As soon as he finished he 'jined his missus.'

"Not a hundred miles from Beauly, and not a hundred years ago either, I once enjoyed a pipe of tobacco, and one of the best glasses of whiskey I ever drank, in a smuggler's cave. I was tired, wet, and weary, and grateful for the shelter; but, heaven forgive me, I entirely forgot to run and tell the nearest exciseman!

"Smuggling tobacco is considered—and very justly, too—a very serious offence against the law. Still it is surprising the amount of this kind of thing that goes on—in a small way. In passenger ships just arrived from abroad, I do not believe there is one out of every ten gentlemen who does not try to run the blockade with a little venture of a pound or two of the fragrant weed, or a box of good cigars. Even ladies are not afraid to do the same. There is a spice of danger and romance about smuggling that commends it especially to that portion of the fair sex who like to be thought fast. There is a charm about a smuggled cigar—if a good one—that there is about no other. I hardly think that even a member of those watery-nosed gentry, the anti-tobaccoites, would have the heart to refuse a cigar from the hand of a beautiful girl, if she told him 'they are excellent weeds, and never paid duty—I smuggled them myself.'

"But, as a rule, the custom-house officers, who come on board to chalk and pass your baggage, are very decent fellows, and can enjoy a glass of wine and a good cigar

as well as anyone ; so, when they civilly ask you which box you will have examined, it is scarcely fair to take the advantage of them too far. Although, mind you, when you are smuggling your pound of tobacco, you must for the time being put your honour in your pocket. After you are clear of the custom-house you can take it out again.

"Captains of passenger ships are often members in some way of the preventive force. I remember coming from India once with a lady who belonged to one of the best families in England. I remember her look of innocence one day, as she leant over the table and confided to the captain that she was in possession of two boxes of cigars, and asked his advice as to the safest means of smuggling them on shore. But that look was quickly changed to one of terror, as the captain clapped his fingers in his ears and cried, 'For goodness' sake, madam, don't tell me about that. If I did my duty, I should report you.' I believe she succeeded in landing her cargo safely enough for all this.

"I had a Newfoundland dog once, who, I afterwards learned, used to do all their smuggling for a whole company of marines. The ship lay about a mile from the dockyard at which our boats landed, and, of course, a pound of tobacco, if carried about a man in any way, would have been seized at once. The dog used to be sent on shore for a swim and a run. When about half-way to land, a log of wood would be pitched overboard for the Newfoundland, who, of course, brought it safely on shore, and trundled it through the dockyard safely enough, the staid-looking policemen gazing in admiration at the noble fellow's strength, but knowing no more than the dog did that there was tobacco inside the log he carried ; and even had they suspected it, it would have been far from easy to make the animal relinquish his booty.

"*A tobacco shirt.* Did ever you wear a tobacco shirt ? I did once. We had just arrived at Peterhead from abroad in the barque 'Pimpernel.' My share of the cigars the captain had kindly hidden for me in the large sealing telescope that hung in his own cabin. The custom-house officers didn't see through that. The

spectioneer sewed my tobacco—cakes—up into a garment not unlike a coat of mail, and this I put on next my skin just as the vessel entered the mouth of the harbour. Presently off came the custom-house men—nice pleasant fellows they were. We got smoking and drinking champagne down in the cabin, and I forgot all about the tobacco shirt, but not for very long. The weather was warm, and coming directly from the icy North, I naturally felt it more so. After a few glasses of wine, I began to perspire; then my torments commenced. Virtue, they say, is its own reward; sin in my case brought its own punishment, and if I live to be as old as Methuselah, I don't think I am likely to forget the nausea, the sickness, and agony I endured until I got on shore, had a warm bath, and about a bottle of brandy hot.

"Smuggling a few sticks of cavendish, or a bundle of cigars, is a thing that everybody does. Its very naughtiness makes it nice, but no more tobacco shirts for me, thank you.

"An old Irish friend of mine told me the following," continued the Captain, "and I have no reason to doubt the truth of it. I give it in his own words, as nearly as I can." Said Rory McRae one evening as we sat together by the fire:

"It's a good many years now, maybe, before aither a one of us here, barring me ould self, was born or dreamt of. The old "Vanguard"—a Queen's ship, mind you—had just returned from a commission, and was lying at anchor at Portsmouth, and about to pay off. Now, this is just the time that aither man or officer tries to seize the opportunity (small blame to them!) to smuggle a bit of ship's. And the land sharks, faith, they know that well enough, too, and so they keep a lively look-out. Well, the old "Vanguard" had been searched and the tobacco handed over—honestly, to all appearance—and the paying off had commenced, when one night, just as the night custom-house officer was coming off in his bit of a cobble to relieve his mate, what should he find, right under the bows, but a shore boat? And "Troth," says he to himself, "I'll have a keek inside her." Now, there

wasn't a soul on board of this boat, but there was tobacco galore; in troth she was filled with it. Well, as there was nobody in her, there was nobody to blame; so this land shark simply took charge of her. Then he sent on shore for advice and assistance, and the ship was searched once more, but properly this time; and sure enough, not only in the lining of the ship, but in the very pump wells themselves, there were oceans of 'baccy. "My eyes!" said the land sharks, "here's a pretty go!" So they seized the ship forthwith, in the name of the Queen, and condemned her to be sold by auction. You see, this was a very pretty bit of red tape that couldn't be dispensed with. So the "Vanguard" was towed into the dockyard, and basined for the purpose. But, lo and behold! on the day of the sale there wasn't a single bidder at all at all, nor a single soul to attend the sale aither, except the Port Admiral himself; for 'deed, indeed, it's as sure as I tell you, every living soul had been sent out of the dock-yard hours before the auction commenced, and the gates were locked. Then the "Vanguard" was duly put up; and after a wee bit of haggling and "going, going, gone-ing," she was knocked down to the Port Admiral for the large sum of one shilling; and so the nation got the "Vanguard" back.

"Well done!" said I; "but they are clever fellows as a rule, those land sharks."

"Too clever be half," replied Rory, "at times, and at times they're the biggest fools out. Bedad, it was all through their cleverness that I found meself in gaol one foine morning. You see, it was just like this: I was the bold skipper of the saucy "Skipjack." I had been down the Levant with a cargo of dried fish and sundries, and was returning with a cargo of fruit and sundries; of course this had nothing to do with it, only we had plenty of good 'baccy on board, and cigars, too, for the matter of that. Well, we had fine weather all the way in the Mediterranean, passed Gib. all right, and went staggering away towards Ould England's chalky cliffs under a rattling ten-knot breeze, and everything went well till we were half-ways across the bay, when the weather thickened

a bit, the wind veered round a few points, and by-and-bye it came on to blow Armstrongs. I didn't like the looks of it, and for the three following nights and days sorra an inch of me ever turned in at all ; and troth I hardly got below to me meals.'

"At the very thoughts of this Rory paused and looked for a moment at the fire, dreamingly, musingly, and I had to take the poker and stir it up, by way of stirring Rory out of his reverie.

"Now,' he continued, 'we lost only a bit of bulwark, a bit of canvas, and a stick or two, but we were all tired ; the Channel was chafing and chopping, and occasionally taking aim at us with a green sea, and behaving generally as if the ould devil himself was under stirring it up with his tail. So you may be sure there were none of us sorry when, one evening, the Needles hove in sight, and the pilot came on board presently and took us in charge.'

"Come below for half a second, ould boy,' I says, says I, 'and have a tot of rum ; for, bedad, the weather's both cowld and ugly.'

"With all the pleasure in life,' says he ; and down we went.

"Help yourself,' says I. 'Deed will I?' says he ; and he did, just as pilots do, you know, putting his hand well round the tumbler, and filling it to the breadth of his brawny hand.

"Now,' says I, 'I am going to turn in a bit, so just you clap that pilot coat of moine over your own. I'm a bigger man than you, and it'll hould ye aisly.'

"It's mindful ye are, capt'n,' says he, putting on my coat. Then he gives a bit of a sniff, for I was sealing up the 'baccy and cigars, only just leaving a bit on the table for dacency sake.

"Fine flavoured tobacco,' says he.

"And right welcome ye are,' I says, 'to a pound o' the best o' it.'

"So the pilot pockets the pound o' 'baccy, and stumps on deck, and five minutes after I was as sound asleep as ever I was in me loife, bedad. Well, next morning the pilot was off, and away we were in harbour, and the

land sharks were on board of us. In an hour, or maybe less, everything was snug, and I was congratulating myself on my safe return, and longing like a bird to get away on shore.

"' You're sure,' says one of the sharks, 'you haven't got any more tobacco but what you've told us of.'

"' Sure and sartin,' says I; 'sorra the ounce but what you've seen.'

"' Then,' says the shark, 'may this be your coat?'

"' Deed is it?' I says.

"' Well,' says he, pulling out the pilot's pound of tobacco, which, without maning it a bit, he had left in the pocket of my coat, 'you are our prisoner, and we seize the ship in the name of the Queen.'

"Now, here was a pretty kettle of fish, and there was no use cutting up rusty about it aither.

"' Before the beak you go, cap'n,' says the spokesman shark, 'before the beak you goes, if you were twenty times capt'n.'

"And faith and sure I had always considered meself a respectable member of society until then, but it quite took the concate out o' me to be taken on shore and popped into a cell with as little ceremony as you would clap a dog into a kennel. Not much comfort in that cell, sure enough—a wooden bed and a timber pillow. But where is it a sailor couldn't sleep? And next morning, troth, it took the concate still more out o' me to be marched before the beak in company with the biggest set of rogues and blacklegs you could wish to see; and, bedad, there was one very fetching girl among the lot, too, only she wasn't exactly sober, and she called me 'old sly bones,' and she had one of the purtiest black eyes ever you saw in your life. 'Och, Rory,' says I to myself. 'Rory, you old rogue, what do you think o' yerself now thin?'

"' Well,' said I, 'and how did you get out o' the scrape, Rory?'

"' Troth,' Rory replied, 'not quite so aisly as I got into it; but ye don't catch me giving 'baccy to pilots any more, if they wear my coat and all.'

"And now, boys, hammock's the word."

CHAPTER X.

DR. DIBSON AGAIN

“ I ’LL read you to-night,” said the Doctor on the next sea-pie night, “ a study in psychology. Let me call it

“THE CURIOUS CASE OF JONES *PÈRE*.

“ During several years as a physician in general practice one naturally meets with a great many cases which, if reported, would be found interesting, not only to the medical man and students of psychology, but to the general reader as well. I have taken notes of many of these ; yet with me the secrets of my patients are safe. In black and white, passages from the life history—often very sad, sometimes humorous enough—though many of them are, no eye but mine dare scan them ; they are there in that large book of mine, in yonder glass case. The book itself is locked, the case is locked, and I keep the keys. Probably, when these bones of mine are mingling with their kindred dust, some of these sketches may see the light of day ; but, even then, the names of persons and places will be altered, so that not even the families with which they are connected will know that they are reading about their own relatives.

“ But the case of Jones *père* is of so curious a nature, and so unique, that I have yielded to the solicitations of many friends, and consented to give a short sketch of it. I have been all the more easily persuaded to do so, inasmuch as this particular Jones is dead and gone, and his friends have long since left for other lands.

“ There were two Joneses—you will have guessed this from the title of this paper—father and son.

"Jones *père* was a middle-aged man when I first knew him. At all events, he confessed to forty-five ; although, for the matter of that, he was far more strong and hale than most of the young men we see about us to-day. Jones was a neighbour of mine, living in an adjoining villa in the pleasant little village of Sonning.

"His younger days Jones had spent in the City, and it was only lately he had come to live in this quiet place, having amassed what he was pleased to call a goodly nest egg, which nest egg he trusted his only son Thomas would keep rolling. Thomas was about twenty, and apparently just the lad to follow in his father's footsteps.

"Jones *père* used to go up to town regularly every Saturday, 'just to see how the world wagged'—Jones's own words—and as regularly as the postman, the same evening, he returned, accompanied by his son ; and the two were never a moment apart until Monday morning. They dined together ; together they walked or rode, for they were both capital horsemen ; and on Sundays they went arm-in-arm to church together.

"As Jones *père* didn't keep much company, he used to be lonely enough upon the week-days, and was never better pleased than when I could manage to spend the evening with him, dining, cracking a bottle of old wine, or playing a game of chess. But life is rather short for chess—a doctor's life is, at all events ; and I was often-times obliged to bid my friend a hurried good night in the middle of a most interesting game, and rush off to take my place at the bedside of sickness or in the chamber of death.

"In appearance Jones was not unprepossessing. He was rather undersized in build, to be sure, and was slightly, very slightly, inclined to corpulency ; but he had a grand and massive head—albeit he did let his grey hair grow rather long for my taste—and a face of great intelligence and decision of character. Very active, too, he was in all his habits, and very temperate. Though he didn't go to bed with the lark, he generally rose soon after that interesting songster. 'Little sleep satisfies me,' Jones would say ; and, sure enough, early on the dewy

summer mornings, you might have seen him out in his garden, tending the roses or culling a flower to adorn the dinner table. Jones never employed a gardener; and—good sign!—working made him hungry and happy too. Well, even when Jones was quite hidden from view among the peas, or behind the raspberry canes, you could tell ‘by the smoke that so gracefully curled’ that he was there, for Jones was seldom without a pipe in his mouth.

“There are two kinds of medical practitioners in this world whom I have always dreaded to meet in consultation—your total abstainer and your anti-tobaccoite. I have always preached moderation and temperance in everything, and why should not one accept the gifts that God sends him? Talk of stimulants, indeed! there is stimulant—even alcoholic—in the very food we eat; talk of narcotics! then why not refuse to eat an onion or a lettuce? Man is a machine; sometimes the machine needs oiling, or it may tend to stop. At times the wheels fly all too fast, and thus may soon wear out. In the former case, what better oil than wine? in the latter, what more gentle curb than a simple pipe? If we could live the lives of the beasts of the field, then, I grant you, neither wine nor tobacco would be any longer necessaries. But I digress. It was not so much the quantity Jones *père* smoked which I objected to—it was the quality. He seemed to have no taste in the way of *good* tobacco; I, on the other hand, have always been epicurean in this matter. But it seemed quite a matter of indifference to Jones, so long as he had a pipe in his mouth, what vile compound was inside of it; and I’ve often seen him pitch away the end of one of my most fragrant weeds, and proceed at once to fill his dhudeen or meerschaum with the commonest twist; he didn’t seem to appreciate the difference. Indeed, when at last I fell into the habit of spending about three evenings out of seven at Jones’s, I used invariably to keep two coats there; an old one for Jones’s company, and a non-fumigated one, to slip into, after a wash, when suddenly called to attend my patients.

"Jones wasn't a widower, but one word about his wife will suffice. She was an insipid wee woman, of an undecided temperament, but inclining to the nervous; fair as to hair, milky in complexion, easily melted to tears, and not the sort of person one would care to have as his first lieutenant in a sick room, if death were hovering around. The only other constant member of the household was a tall, rawboned, dark lady, a relative, of matured opinions. She kept the keys, gave out the tea, and treated Mrs. Jones like a spoiled child. Then there was Biddy the maid, and Jane the cook, and Tom the man-of-all-work, who cleaned the knives, blacked the boots, and brought round the cob or the one-horse shay.

"It was one beautiful evening in early autumn that I first noticed something strange about Jones *père*. We were smoking together in the greenhouse, over the chess-board. Jones had made several unthinking moves before he stopped abruptly, and looked me in the face.

"'What like's my tongue, doctor?' he asked.

"It was silvery white, but not much furred—the nervous tongue.

"'Feel my pulse' was his next demand, as he stretched his hand over the table.

"'Don't be silly, friend Jones,' I said, gently pushing back his arm, and proceeding to light a fresh cigar; 'Your pulse is a first-rate one, I've no doubt. I don't want you to give up smoking, mind you,' I continued, talking emphatically; 'but I do wish you would change that beastly pigtail for something decent, Jones.'

"We continued the game in silence, and I thought my friend had forgotten the conversation; but when we were done, and Jones *beaten*—and that was unusual—he threw himself back in his chair, and laughed till the roof rang again. 'Something decent!' he kept repeating between each burst of merriment; 'a jolly good joke, too—something decent!—ha! ha! ha!'

"'Good night, Jones,' said I, feeling sure he had taken more wine than was good for him.

"After the gate was shut, I could hear Jones's retreating footsteps on the gravel, and hear him repeating to

himself, again and again, ‘Something decent!—deuced fine, too!—ha! ha! ha!’

“About this time I took my annual trip to the Continent for six weeks. I returned on a Thursday, and was somewhat surprised, on entering the parlour of Jones *père*, to find Thomas the son there, and all alone. Something else struck me as strange: there were no pipes about, but plenty of flowers, and *fresh curtains were hung*, and there was an entire absence of the smell of stale twist that alarmed me; and I hastily inquired about my friend. Was he ill?

“‘No—that is—sit down, doctor; sit down,’ said Thomas. ‘To tell you the truth, sir, there’s been something funny about father of late. He is a kind of off his feed; he doesn’t get much sleep of a night; he has been attending some of the meetings, and’—here *was* a climax!—‘he’s given up smoking.’

“‘Is there anything peculiar in his manner?’ I asked, with much concern.

“‘Well,’ said Thomas, ‘he is quiet, you know, and all that; but—hush! here he comes; you’ll soon find out.’

“Jones *père* was thinner; there wasn’t a doubt about that. His face, too, was pale, and there, in his eye, smouldered a living fever.

“He greeted me kindly, but just as if he had seen me only the day before, and at once proposed a glass of wine and a game of chess. Jones *père* refused to drink himself, on the plea that it heated him, which I could easily believe. When I offered him a cigar, ‘What!’ he cried, in the grandiloquent tones of a paid lecturer, ‘sacrifice body and soul on the shrine of a filthy weed? Nevermore! The move’s with you.’

Presently, and apparently with a purpose, Thomas began to read aloud an account of a terrible accident in a coal-pit. As he proceeded, Jones *père* brightened up in the most surprising manner; his face became radiant with smiles, till, when his son came to the mournful scenes at the pit’s mouth, on the recognition of the dead by their relatives, Jones *père* seemed unable to contain

himself a moment longer, but laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks, swore he had never heard of anything half so funny, then slapped his thigh and laughed again ; till, positively, we couldn't help laughing too, and you would have said we were all mad together. Then, thinking it was a pity Jones shouldn't have something proper to laugh at, I began to tell him an exceedingly funny anecdote I had that day read in a Yankee paper. Jones's face elongated and saddened at once, and, by the time I had finished, poor Jones was crying.

"' For goodness sake, if you love me, say no more,' he entreated.

"' But,' I insisted, ' my dear friend, you don't seem to see the pith of the joke—this old lady' —

"' Oh ! ' cried Jones, piteously wringing his hands, ' for God's sake, doctor, *don't tell me the pith of the joke.*'

" I sat long musing over the fire that night before going to bed. I never before read or heard of a similar case to Jones *père's*—a man to weep at fun, and go mad with joy at a tale of woe ! ' Why,' I concluded, starting up to undress, ' Jones is mad. There aren't two ways about it ; his brain seems turned bottom upwards.'

" I found Jones next morning seated at breakfast. He was reading aloud, in a voice choked with sobs and emotion, an account of the elopement of a coal-heaver's daughter with a cabman, of the pursuit by the father, and capture of the fugitives in a public-house ; of the oceans of whiskey that followed, and the vows between the three of eternal friendship ; and of the wind-up of the whole in the police cells.

" An alarming fire—same newspaper—with sad loss of life, caused Jones to laugh until he had to leave the table, half-choked. Thomas told me privately that even at the church on Sunday Jones *père* had insulted the parson. He had been moved to tears by his raciest remarks, but when the reverend gentleman launched forth into the pathetic, and when Jones ought to have cried, if any crying were to be done, he had stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, and tittered till he nearly set the congregation in a roar.

"Things looked more serious than I cared to admit. The case, in my experience, had no precedent, and I was fairly puzzled. Of one thing, however, I felt convinced: until I could induce my friend to resume the use of *good* tobacco, in some form, I could have no hopes of the case.

"Matters went on pretty much the same for a week, then one morning, just as I was making up my visiting slip, Tom, the man, burst into my surgery, grinning from ear to ear. 'Lord! sir,' cried the fellow, 'master ha gone clean off his chump, *he have*.'

"I didn't wait to strangle the brute, but rushed off to the house of my friend, whom I hadn't far to look for. I found him at the foot of the garden, standing, bare-headed, beside an open grave, near which lay what at first I took for a baby's coffin, but it turned out to be Jones *père*'s fiddle-case, and in it was Jones *père*'s biggest meerschaum pipe. Jones had on a long night-gown, that belonged to his wife I suppose, over a pair of black gaiters, and was reading the burial service. I stood silently by until the burial was finished, then I advanced.

"'This is a solemn occasion, Jones,' I said.

"'It is the happiest day in my life,' said Jones, smiling through his tears.

"As usual with me when puzzled, I took a pinch of snuff, and mechanically handed the box to Jones. Jones took a long pinch, Jones took a strong pinch, and before he returned the box he repeated the dose no less than three times.

"'Hurrah!' I shouted. And next moment I was dancing wildly round the grave singing, 'Corn Cobs, twist your hair.' My difficulty was at end—Jones had forgotten that *snuff was tobacco*.

"The best of the joke was that Jones imagined that *I* had gone suddenly mad; and, poor fellow, for weeks afterwards his anxiety for the state of my health was quite amusing, if not to say affecting. I humoured him in every way. I even consented to go to town with him to consult a famous physician, in order that he might prescribe for *me*.

" My plan of treatment lay clear before me from the very day of the fiddle-case funeral. Every one of us took to snuffing ; every one of us carried a ' mull,' and we constantly pestered Jones to partake, which he seldom refused to do. I snuffed, and Thomas snuffed, and delicate Mrs. J. took a pinch, and the tall dark lady, who kept the keys and gave out the tea, snuffed more than all of us, and even Tom, the man-of-all-work, when he brought round the cob or the one-horse shay, took a pinch and handed the box to his master.

" But we cured Jones *père* between us. In six months' time, what with attention to the rules of health, simple medicines, simple food, and snuff, Jones was once more ' clothed and in his right mind,' and smoking again, like a man, *but* decent tobacco, mind you !

" Jones had forgotten all about the funeral of the fiddle-case and the meerschaum pipe. They were never dug up in his time, and for my part I did not wish them so, but sincerely hoped they would rest in their grave until the day of resurrection.

" This, then, is the curious case of Jones *père*.

" Thank you, doctor ; a kind of temperance story with a moral through it," said the Mate. " But who comes next ?"

" Why, yourself," said the Doctor.

" Well, ahem !" began the Mate, pulling out a roll of manuscript, " not being much of a story-teller, I thought I'd throw a few facts together and give 'em a name."

" It's all about an inn at a village where I resided some years ago. I have made one or two sketches, and call my yarns, ' The Inn of the Jolly Tapsters.' "

CHAPTER XI.

THE INN OF THE "JOLLY TAPSTERS."

A Village Absurdity.

WHERE stands my village ? Away down in the green and tree-clad bosom of the shire of Blank. "Blank?" you cry, and you look blank ; "why, there is no such shire." But there is such a word, and a handy one it is, especially in print. Let us see what the dictionary says of the word. I turn me to my "Maunder." "BLANK;" yes, here it is—"BLANK, *a void*," and void means empty ; that is what the landlord of the "Jolly Tapsters'" barrels never were of good beer, nor his cosy bar-room, of a winter's evening, of good company. Again, "BLANK, *white*;" that does certainly not refer to the faces of the happy folk that, night after night in winter, surround the Tapsters' roaring fire, nor to the houses in the sweet wee village itself ; they are hoary with years, they had the quaintness of a bygone age ; they look as if they had stood for a thousand years, and had quite made up their minds to put in another thou. ; no, *white* won't do. Once more, "BLANK, *dull*." Bless your soul, sir, no ; that is worse and worse ; quiet we may be, sometimes, while drawing nectar from our pipes and listening to a song or an interesting story, but dull ? never ; I scorn the impeachment, and, as the last meaning "Maunder" gives—namely, "*confused*," hints at drinks for *drunk*, instead of drinks for *dry*, I pitch the old gentleman to the dev—, ahem ! for, however blank the shire might have been, there was nothing blank about the dear little village of Twintleton. It lay before many a coming stranger in

"A sweet, green coombe, thro' which fresh brooklets run,
And the great hostel sleeping in the sun,"

The great hostelry was the "Jolly Tapsters," and wasn't it great? Didn't it lie a bit back from the main road on the top of a high, green bank, shaded in summer by two giant-spreading oaks, with benches beneath; hadn't it queer, old-fashioned windows, queer, tall chimneys, and queer everything, and a bowling-green to boot, away behind, and gardens besides? Strangers often came to the village, and we never were known to "'eave 'arf a brick" at the head of any one of them. They were always welcome to a snug corner of the bar, a pipe, and a pull at a pot. That's the sort of people we were. The landlord was just the kind of man you would have expected to see in such a place. A burly, but genial old fellow, big enough to fill any armchair that ever was built, so the neighbours called him Big Barlow, with the emphasis on the last syllable. A bit fond of laying down the law was Big Barlow at times, and maybe a trifle self-opinionated; but then he was certainly old enough to have an opinion of his own. Barlow had two pretty daughters, consequently he could afford to smoke his pipe and drink his pot in the bar, while they brought in the needful, and attended to the wants of the customers. This was all as it should be, good old-fashioned style.

I don't think I had been three weeks residing at Twintleton ere I became acquainted with Billy Webster. He was, indeed, an oddity. The landlord was referring to him in his talk, one winter's evening, as I entered the bar-parlour of the "Jolly Tapsters," stopping for a moment on the threshold to shake the thick, dry flakes of snow from off my topcoat.

"Bring a broom, Kitty," cried Big Barlow. "Isn't it snowing, sir, just? We be going to have a heavy fall, I knows." Then the charming Kitty hastened to obey, and, having made my feet comfortable, I joined the group and lit my pipe, and the landlord quietly resumed the conversation.

"There is no denying it, neighbours, Billy Webster is a thin man," and Big Barlow took the pipe from his mouth—a nice, long, cool churchwarden—and smiled up at the ceiling as he made the remark; "ay, neighbours,

Billy be *ree*-markably thin ; their aint no getting out o' that."

And the neighbours smiled, too, without removing their clays ; smiled and nodded through the reek, and the landlord laughed and went on—

" He be thin, and the worst of it is, he aint no shape, either ; just look how them clothes o' his 'ang around him. There aint no tailor as ever lived that could fit Billy. And look at him, behind, again. Behind be blowed ; why, neighbours, he aint got any.

" But, neighbours"—and here the honest landlord grew serious all at once, and looked around him almost savagely, as if defying contradiction—" Billy's like the bad place ; Billy's bottomless, but there the likeness ends ; Billy aint like the bad place in any other way whatsomever. I dares anyone o' ye to say he is."

Whether or not there was anyone in that room bold enough to give the lie to the landlord's assertion, I cannot say ; I think it highly improbable, for Big Barlow was a bit of an authority in his own good bar of the "*Jolly Tapsters*." However, the conversation was here cut short by the entrance of no less a personage than Billy Webster himself. He didn't come in ; he burst in, he fussed in, with a "Here we goes again, good folks," and "Aint it jolly cold just, my eye ! aint it wintry though ?" And Billy rubbed his hands, and rubbed his thighs, and, in fact, he had a kind of a general rub all over. Everybody made room for Billy at once, and Kitty ran off to draw him with her own fair fingers his modest pint of "'arf-and-'arf" 'gainst he might order it. But Billy was in no hurry to settle, that was evident ; in those days this little man was about the most nervous cuss you can well imagine. A blue-bottle fly wasn't a patch upon him ; he buzzed round the room and round the room, laughing at goodness knows what, and asking a dozen questions without waiting to get an answer to any single one of them, till first one of the neighbours laughed, probably because Big Barlow did the same ; then another joined, and another, till at last it became a general chorus ; platoon firing was nothing to it ; a

rookery in nesting season was nothing to it; nothing was nothing to it; and when he couldn't stand it any longer without the danger of disintegration, the landlord got out of his chair and fairly pulled Billy Webster by the tails of his coat into an empty seat; then Kitty brought his pint, and peace was restored.

This little scene only gives the reader an idea of Billy's usual form.

In those days a pipe or cigar was never seen within the lips of my friend and neighbour, Billy Webster. But bide a wee—*tempora mutantur*; and Billy changed with them.

The landlord was right about Billy's outfit. His tailor had certainly failed to fit him. There was a sad, an almost solemn laxity about his nether garments, for example, that suggested stick legs, and brought scarecrows to the mind of the beholder. His coat, too, was a study in drapery worthy of a Whistler. A little swallow-tailed blue one it was, with two rows of gilt buttons in front and two single ones behind; and didn't those buttons shine, too! In the manufacture of this coat the tailor was so far to blame in that he had made the waist of it a mile too long; and when Billy went a-fussing and a-bobbing-round, and those little coat tails of his went a-dancing and a-wiggle-wagging about, you would have laughed at Billy even had you been just about to make your last will and testament. And there was nothing to fill out Billy's anatomy, nor to swell his little coat tails.

The best-natured little man in the world notwithstanding; couldn't have put him out had you tried ever so hard. To a certain extent Billy was always merry; when he endeavoured to look solemn everybody laughed at him. Sage remarks didn't seem to roll easily over Billy's tongue. On the other hand, he had never been really in a rage, except once in his life, "And then," said Billy, "everybody laughed at me, and I never saw the fun of getting angry again."

Nobody knew how old Billy was, and nobody seemed to care to ask; he might have been forty, fifty, or a

hundred, or over. He lived all by himself in a morsel of a cottage in the corner of a field, and there was a morsel of a garden attached thereto as well, and both the cottage and garden belonged to Billy. He owned no landlord, and yet the village of Twintleton never troubled its head to wonder where on earth Billy had made the money to pay for these luxuries ; for look here, in Twintleton, so long as you call for your pint or your pot, and pay for it like a man, Twintleton doesn't care a crooked sixpence where you were raised, or who was your grandfather. That's what Twintleton is like.

Now, in these days there lived in this dear wee village one who rejoiced in the somewhat euphonic name of Sally Bunny. A widow was Sally, and she lived in the almshouses. Sally's husband had been a "brute," I have her own words for that, and the greatest favour he had ever done Sally was to let his jaw drop, and allow himself to be quietly put under the sod. A very little and very old dumpling of a woman was Sally ; she didn't walk, she waddled, so fat and round she was. Her face was exceedingly wrinkled and gathered into many puckers, after the fashion and shape of a Malaga raisin ; her mouth might have been made, or say drilled, with the end of a kitchen poker, and her eyes blinked bead-like at you over her faded cheeks. She could laugh, could Sally, and that, too, right heartily ; and she could weep, too, at a moment's notice. Like an April morning, she was all sunshine and showers. Although this interesting little widow lived in the almshouse, it wasn't living altogether in clover ; the bare necessaries of life were allowed her, for its luxuries Sally had to toil, and that right hard. "I do like a pinch of snuff," she would tell you, "and I works well to earn it, too." The scene of Sally's labours was the great highway betwixt Bath and London, her tools were a barrow, a broom, and a shovel, her stock-in-trade the horse dung, which she sold for her neighbours' gardens. Wet day or dry day, Sally was out ; but industrious as she was, if you met her returning in the gloaming towards her home, and gave her kindly "good evening," she was always glad to stop

and gossip. She would always tell you about her "daughter in Amerikay," about her son in Twintleton who was never well out of one scrape till he was into another—here she would weep—and about the fifty little school imps who had that day chased her, singing "Sally Bunny, Sally Bunny, Sally Bunny," till her poor old head ached again, and then she would gasp and look plaintive as she wound up by telling you—"My back, sir, my poor back, sir, do ache, for I've been a dunging all day, sir, and it be hard work for an old creature like I." Sally referred to her arduous profession of manure collector.

Now, Twintleton is naturally a quiet place, but when one morning news came that Sally's "daughter in Amerikay" had died and left her mother a hundred pounds a year, then Twintleton for the time being simply took leave of its senses. Sally was a lady now; she left the almshouse, she left off "dunging," she had a complete new outfit, and went to church holding up her head with the best of us. And now, too, a change came suddenly o'er the spirit of Billy Webster's dream. He still frequented the bar-room of the "Jolly Tapsters," but, to the astonishment of everybody, he changed his tipple to hot Scotch, and he lost much of his former brusqueness of manner. Murder will out, and when one evening Billy told the neighbours that he was in love, and that his flame was no other than the youthful Sally, great indeed was the rejoicing, and the joy was general. There was such a rattling of pewter mugs as had never before been heard in Twintleton, and a regular chorus of "go in and win, Billy, go in and win. Hurra ! for Billy Webster."

Billy thought he would lose no time about it. After such encouragement failure seemed impossible; the word wasn't in Billy's lexicon at all. So the very next evening, as fate would have it, Billy met Sally—accidentally, of course—coming waddling home from Wargrave.

"What!" cried Sally, on hearing her lover's proposal, "what! marry thee? he! he! he! not if I knows it, he! he! you're far to thin a young man for I.

As Sally spoke she caught poor Billy by the coat lapel, and spun him round and round as you might a top, and she eyed him up and she eyed him down, and she scanned him fore and she scanned him aft, and she laughed poor Billy to scorn.

This was hard upon my hero, but Billy was none of your chicken-hearted chaps that one blow knocks down never to get up again. Billy made a resolve, a firm resolve. "I'll get fat," says Billy, "and Sally will have me; I'll get fat, or die in the attempt, so help me Moses."

Then Billy sent to town, and he bought the book by Banting, and Billy studied that book by night and by day, and acted upon its precepts, upside down, as it were; for all things that fat folks might not eat, Billy ate, and the things that fat folks were to avoid, these did Billy do, and he lived like a fighting-cock. But, woe is me, Billy seemed to get thinner than ever, so that the neighbours oftenimes shook their heads and murmured, "Billy's booked."

Now, I've already said that Billy never smoked, but when one evening the landlord of the "Jolly Tapsters" said, "Why doan't 'ee try a churchwarden, Billy?" "I'm dashed if I don't," cried Billy emphatically. And he did, too. Night after night you might have seen Billy quietly sitting behind his long clay. The effect was wonderful, it was astonishing, it was stupendous. The kindly narcotic soothed his overwrought nervous system; Billy no longer pricked about like a parched pea in a frying-pan, and he soon began to lay on flesh and alter in shape in a remarkable manner; even his coat tails filled out, and his breeches were no longer baggy.

Sally herself noted the change, and her heart yearned towards him. "La! she said, one day, "you be getting a fine fellow, Mr. Webster."

With lively recollections of his first attempt at wooing, I believe Billy Webster would now have held proudly aloof; but there was that hundred a year of Sally Bunny's in the balance. Billy couldn't forget that; so one beautiful summer evening two fat little old figures

were seen waddling home from Wargrave arm-in-arm, and everyone knew that Sally Bunny and Billy Webster would soon be made one flesh. And so they were. And the village of Twintleton rejoiced exceedingly.

O ! praise be unto the weed divine, for Billy still lives with his Sally in peace and joy, a jolly little, fat little farmer. And everything around him is fat and jolly. His pigs are fat, his geese are simply butter, and his Brahma fowls—those big beggars, you know, with breeches on—why, their legs are like composite candles, three to a pound. And children are rising up around Billy and calling him blessed and fat—why, fat isn't the word to describe the startling amount of adiposity that everywhere surrounds the bairns of Billy Webster.

It's a queer world.

* * * * *

Sometimes, of an afternoon, there would drop into the inn of the "Jolly Tapsters" a bicyclist, looking tired and weary enough, and wishful for tea and a break in his journey townward or down south. Pray, don't turn up your nose at the mention of tea. You wouldn't have turned up your nose at the tea they placed before you at the "Jolly Tapsters." The spotless cloth would be laid in the cosiest room in the best of styles ; the knives glittered, and the forks shone *like* silver, if they weren't. Then there was the fragrant congou itself, the delicious country cream, and the butter—rich in colour as the golden cowslip, sweet as an early primrose, to say nothing of those crisp and lovely rashers, and the pearly eggs with yolks of the deepest red. No, your nose would have naturally been turned in quite another direction.

"Occasional Tapsters" we used to call those wandering bicyclists, and most excellent fellows some of them turned out to be, and redolent of mirth and fun. True, the anecdotes they dispensed might have been told at many a table in far-off London town. What did that matter ? they were all fresh and new to us simple-minded Twintletonians. They—these bicyclists—would

look shyly into the room at first, apparently envying our comfortable attitudes around the parlour fire, taking a glance at the pewters and a look at the pipes. They would stand for a moment half-apologetically, with the door in hand, as if they wished to ask, "Is this room private? Would it be intrusion to venture in?" But where will you find men more hospitable and kind—or, to use a Scottish phrase, more "good-willy"—than your genuine smoker? Echo answers "nowhere." They were always welcomed in, and, as far as I can remember, they invariably made themselves perfectly at home in a free and easy way, as gentlemen of the world ought. I made the acquaintance—nay, more, I gained the friendship—of one of these, whom I am never likely to forget. He dropped in promiscuously one evening, when we Tapsters were mustered pretty strongly, but we sent for another chair at once. From his dress, and the cut of his jib, I immediately put him down as a sailor—the first mate, perhaps, of some swift clipper or bounding barque that sailed periodically to the China seas. I was so far right in my conjecture, he was a sailor doctor.

He had travelled much in America, the land of big licks, and many a humorous yarn did he spin us about his friends the Yanks. However, to his credit be it said, he never insisted on your believing his wonderful stories. "Of course, gentlemen," he would say, "my tales are all true. They are all facts—ordinary facts, however, and go down better if you take a pinch of salt with them. That's so."

This Occasional Tapster, I think, grew fond of us—well, at least, he was fond of fishing, and would stop for weeks at a time in Twintleton, for sake of the sport which our quiet streams afforded. And some glorious Jacks fell to his rod, too, of which he was justly proud. I've often said of this, that, or t'other friend of mine, that he was the "tallest" smoker ever I knew; but at this moment I feel convinced in my own mind that Dick Arnold—for that was our bold sailor's name—was *the* smoker of smokers. Unless when eating, the pipe—or, rather, *a* pipe—was never out of his mouth; and I

believe he smoked himself nightly into oblivion. Many a long, delicious ramble Dick and I had together, by streams and in woods, and among the numerous sweet, wee villages that nestle here and there on the banks of the winding Thames. When the fish wouldn't bite we took to boating, landing here, there, or anywhere, wherever there was aught to be seen, or an enticing-looking hostelry that promised the allurement of a cool glass of beer. There wasn't much to be seen in the streets of the little towns we sauntered up through; but Dick had one universal remedy for *ennui*. It was embodied in the simple sentence, "Let's buy a pipe." If a village dinner hadn't been satisfactory, or the beer had been hard, "Never mind," Dick would say, "let's go and buy a pipe." If Dick went too early to the station, what did it matter? there was just time to buy a pipe. Buying a new pipe was Dick's panacea for all the ills of life. "Did you ever," he said to me one Sunday as we left the church; "did you ever hear such a drone of a parson? And the worst of it is," he added, almost savagely, "one can't go and buy a pipe." This was hard on Dick. Dick, when he purchased a new pipe, never threw away the old one; he simply dropped it into the right-hand pocket of his monkey jacket, and forthwith loaded and lit up the new favourite, with a celerity which almost bounded on the nervous.

"How does it go, Dick?" I would ask, as soon as he was in full blast.

Dick would be far too full of blissful contentment to give a long answer.

"Prime!" was the usual laconic reply.

For reasons to be hereafter named, Dick Arnold took apartments in the village of Mossfield, and thither he transported all his goods and chattels. He fain would have kept a boat, for the river runs cheek by jowl with the little town; but, as Dick himself said, it wouldn't run to it. Among his goods and chattels were, of course, his pipes. After he had fairly settled down, I went to see him, to smoke in his rooms the calumet of peace. Surely rooms before were never so crowded with pipes.

They were of all sizes, from the Highland cutty up to the Turkish bubble-bubble; of all shapes, from the long clay to the hookah; and of all textures, from humble briar to princely meerschaum. There they were, hung on the walls, lying on the mantel-piece, crowding drawers and cupboards, and all over the house, too, from cellar to attic—pipes, pipes, pipes! Had Dick Arnold been pipe-major to the 92nd Highlanders, he could have given every man in the regiment a pipe, and two each to the officers. That was the sort of man Dick was.

Dick's yarns were never long ones—pithy and humorous enough, but never long.

I was at the riverside, one day, with Dick, when he pulled above water the nose—nothing more—of what might have been a shark, or a hundred-year-old pike, or anything a size less than a whale. Next moment Dick was reeling up a broken line—hooks, and gut, and all were gone.

"Well I'm blowed!" said Dick. "Why, he was as big as the salmon I got put in gaol for. Let's go and buy a pipe."

Same evening Dick might have been seen sitting by the parlour fireside of the "Jolly Tapsters," with his bare feet in his slippers and his knickerbockers loosened at the knee, scarcely hiding his shapely legs. He had a new pipe in each hand, and he was looking somewhat puzzled, first at one, then at the other.

"I ought not to have bought two at once," he said, "but I won't make either jealous. Landlord, I'd like a long clay."

"Dick," said I, "what about that big salmon you got put in limbo for?"

Dick laughed. "There is really nothing in it, you know," he said; "but once, when I was a medical student, and had been working pretty hard to pass an exam., I took it into my head that a breath of Highland air might do me good. I could ill afford such a luxury, but I scraped together all the cash I could, and off I started for the Trossachs, and took lodgings in a small, out-lying house, not far from Callander. I took

the rooms for a month, and paid for them beforehand, to make sure of paying them at all. On the money I had over I thought I would just manage to exist. I had plenty of books and plenty of tobacco, and pipes galore. It was a good thing, too, that I had tobacco; for by the time I had been two weeks in the place, what with my own lack of thrift and the Highland air making me so hungry, I was reduced to my last pound. I could only afford two meals a day, and my luncheon was a long, long smoke. It was the season of the year when the salmon come up the tiny streamlets to spawn; there they were in thousands, you could have thrown them out on the banks in armfuls. Of course they were well watched; there was a keeper for every two or three hundred yards. So no one could touch the salmon; but you might look at them. And that is what I did. I used to wander up and down the banks of the streamlets, smoking, and gaze hungrily down at the fish.

"'Foul fish and all, as they are,' I used to say to myself, 'half a pound or so would go down nicely with a few mashed potatoes.'

"In this strain I must have been thinking aloud one day, when a great shoulder of mutton fist was laid on my back, and on looking round, behold! the brown beard and red face of Donald Oak.

"'How you pe?' says Donald; 'you pe strongly, sir?'

"'As a rule,' said I.

"'Och, then,' says Donald, 'her nainsel is a Hielan' shentleman, but she'll no pe liking to see folks hungry, and for a pit of topacco, troth she'll gaff you a fish.'

"I gripped the Highlander's hand. I squeezed it.

"'Brave man!' I said, 'gaff me a fish; gaff me a big one, and a *pound* of tobacco shall be your guerdon.'

"After dark, for the law was strict, I met Donald and the fish. And it was a whopper; I could hardly carry it, and when I stowed it away in my big sea-chest, even there it hardly had room enough.

"Well, for days after that I had salmon for breakfast, dinner, and supper. I don't know whether my landlady smelt a rat or not, only she held her peace. Smelt a rat,

did I say? Horror of horrors! one fine morning I smelt something infinitely worse. I made the dire discovery that I couldn't eat my fish fast enough. He was going off—he was crying aloud for burial; and, by hook or by crook, buried he must be. The Booie woods weren't far away, and that same night, in their darkest depths, I dug a grave. And next night I wrapped my fish in the columns of the *Daily News*, and sallied forth like a felon to bury him. But, woe is me! hardly had I finished my eerie work, when I found myself fast in the clutches of two stalwart bobbies.

"Clap on the darbies, Jamie!" cried one; "Quick! he's like an eel."

"Resistance was out of the question, and, one hour after, I was being whirled along the road to Stirling gaol. I wasn't quite sure, even then, what I was arrested for, but it soon came out.

"'Wha was the mither o't?' said one of the bobbies.

"'The mither o' what?' said I; 'the mither o' that foul fish?'

"'The mither o' the bairn ye buried,' was the stern reply. 'O ye hardened young villain, ye'll hang as high as Haman for this nicht's wark.'

"Next day I was arraigned for murder, sure enough, before a Stirling bailie. And there was no small amusement in court when I told the story of the salmon. But I was kept under lock and key until the truth of my tale was established, and the fish exhumed. Then I was let off with a fine."

"And went right away and bought a pipe, I suppose," said I.

"That I did," said Dick, laughing; "and I'm not sure I didn't buy two."

The reason why Dick had taken apartments at Mossfield was this: he had fallen in love. Aye, and was to have been married too, and a charming girl his intended was. But the marriage never came off. Ah! dear me, that dark and sullen Thames, how many a life it has to account for! Yes, reader, Dick was drowned, drowned almost close to where his bride-affianced dwelt. He'll never buy another pipe.

CHAPTER X.

DRAWING THE LONG BOW.

OUR mate was a good story-teller, and by no means loath to oblige us. That he sometimes did draw the long bow can, I fear, hardly be denied, after the following brief yarn of his when we had all assembled in the saloon next sea-pie night.

"It is bitterly cold," the doctor said, as he held his palms in front of the stove.

"Is it?" said the mate. "Well, now, I've known it colder."

"Tell us."

"Well, then," he began,

"HOW IS THIS FOR COLD?"

It was away up Spitzbergen way we were, and heading away farther north still as fast as the ice would let us, and the farther north we went the colder it seemed to get. I used to think it strange at first to have to ease an inch or two of ice off my breakfast cup of a morning before I could drink my drop of coffee. But I soon got used to that. One day on coming down to dinner I found a round brown cake-looking thing put on the table before each officer.

"What are these queer round brown things?" says I to the steward.

"Don't you know?" says he, "them's the soup."

I thought that somewhat funny, but I wasn't used to the cold yet. The captain ordered a bottle of rum one day between the first mate and himself—people can stand a good drop up in these latitudes—the steward broke the bottle with the poker and placed the rum on the table in front of them; it was all in a lump, and they had a bradawl each to eat it with. I thought that funny.

The captain had a slight cold once, and took half an ounce of Dover's powder at bedtime and put a bottle of boiling water to his feet; he did sweat, and no mistake, but I little guessed the effect it would have; the sweat got frozen during the night, and we had to put him down, bed and all, for two hours in front of the stove before we got him clear. It was for all the world like opening a mummy. That I also thought funny.

I used to wonder at first why, when one man went to relieve another at the wheel, he always took a kettle of boiling water with him, but this was merely to pour over him, as the poor fellow was always frozen to the spokes. One day the skipper sent six men aloft to reef the fore-top sail; they were all frozen to the yard in less than five minutes, and looked like so many turkeys roosting on a roller. Got them off? Yes, we got them off, but the yard had to be lowered, and the whole business sent below to the engine-room to thaw first.

Cold! I should think it was cold, and no mistake. The thermometer had to be kept constantly in a saucepanful of water over the stove, else it wouldn't have worked at all. At first we used to man the winch every night to wind the clock up, it was so clogged and stiff with the frost; but finally it refused duty entirely, and then the only way we had of telling the time was to keep count of the number of bottles of rum we got through in the day; when we had eaten one each, it was luncheon time; when we had got outside three it was time for tea, and when we had swallowed seven each it was nearly time for bed.

I'll just give you one little instance of the severity of the cold. Truthfulness is one of the traits of my character. Everybody knows that; I believe that, if there was no one in the room except the cat, I could say without fear of contradiction that I never told a story in my life. Well, one night when the frost was at its bitterest, the skipper and myself were in the cabin finishing our seventh bottle and talking about the intense heat of the summer weather out Jamaica way—on very cold nights we always talked about the tropics and tried

to believe we were in them. I could see the skipper's lips moving and I dare say he saw mine. But never a word could we hear, for of course the words froze as soon as they came out of our mouths and fell down on the deck. Well, I told the skipper just one good story to close up with—a true story of course—and then went off to bed. Next morning the weather was very much warmer, and before I drew back my curtain, I could distinctly hear someone in the cabin begin to tell a story. I listened for a bit, for I like a good yarn, but, dash it all, this one was more than even I could swallow. I couldn't stand it, so without drawing back the curtain to see who was speaking, I sang out. "Well," I cried, "of all the big story-tellers that ever I heard try it, I must say you are the biggest, and I don't care a pennypiece who you are."

With that I pulled back the curtain—there wasn't a soul in the cabin, sir—it was the very story that I had told the skipper for naked truth the night before. The steward had swept the frozen words up into a corner and now they were simply thawing and coming up again. How was that for cold?

CHAPTER XI.

I READ A PAPER.

THE captain turned to me. "Heave round," he said, "with your yarn, Gordon." I pulled out my paper like a man, and read as follows, not being much of an extemporaneous talker.

A DIATRIBE ON TAILS.

"Had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
Then, gentle reader, you would find—
Tongues in trees, books in running brooks—
And the *tail* of the serpent over them all—
List, list, O! list!"

I have been chewing the end of my quill, and gazing meditatively at the above quotation for the last five minutes. It does not seem altogether correct, somehow. But there it is, and there it must stand. I shall not waste precious space in mourning over it.

One glance at my title—and a very pretty one it is, I like that word “diatribe”—one glance I say at the title will convince the gentle reader that this paper is devoted to a branch of natural history that has not been very much studied. In fact, the field is almost a new one, the pasture fresh, and so extensive is it, too, that when I have said my say and retired, it will be with the consciousness that I have taken a mere nibble, a bite in the by-going.

“Come hither, hithei, my little page.”

My little page jumps up at the first sound of my voice. He comes trotting towards me, and stands there in front of me, with his head cocked considerably a little bit to one side, his ears well forward, and an enquiring look in those loving brown eyes of his.

My little page in this instance is a gigantic Newfoundland dog.

Now watch and listen, ladies and gentlemen. Here is no deception, I assure you; the conversation that takes place is a genuine one. I talk with my lips and tongue, he speaks with his hazel eyes, his ears, and that great saucy tail that he carries behind him, and finds so handy.

I : shaking a finger and speaking emphatically, “ You old rascal !”

The Dog : “ It’s all right, master ; I know you don’t mean it.”

I : “ But I do mean it. You *are* an old rascal. Tell me this : Who went and buried his biscuit this morning in a flower-bed because he found he couldn’t eat it ?”

The tail has ceased to wag, the ears are no longer forward, the eyes are half shut, and the guilty head begins to droop.

I : “ But don’t grieve, dear boy. There, I pat you, I forgive you, and forget your crime.”

The ears are once more erect, the eyes get bright, and the tail begins to wag anew.

I : " And so, because you see me with my hat on, you expect I'm going out, don't you ? "

A convulsive movement of the tail, a witchy glance from each hazel eye, a little glad spring, as if he felt it would do him good to jump on my shoulders and embrace me.

Then he stands still again, waiting for further developments on my part.

I : " Fetch my stick, then. Thanks. Now my gloves. Thank you ; but go back for the other. You might have saved yourself that journey."

And now we are outside, and neither the movements of the tail nor the movements of the dog himself can any more be studied. For at times it is impossible to say whether the dog has charge of the tail, or the tail has charge of the dog. They are whirling round and round together, they are describing circles, describing *parabolæ*, describing all sorts of figures. All I can see is a mist of blackness, which I believe to be my dog, a touch of vermillion, which I believe is his tongue, and a gleam of white, which I daresay represents his teeth.

Now, it would serve no useful purpose were I to tackle the question—Why does a dog wag his tail ? Answer I could, and that, too, in a most satisfactory manner ; but I should have to bring forward such a host of eminent authorities on comparative anatomy ; I should have to name so many nerves and mention so many muscles that this diatribe of mine would be dubbed dry reading, and I myself voted a bore. No. Let me rather attempt to describe a few of the uses to which dogs' tails are put, and the tails of other animals, in the economy of Nature.

A dog's tail, then, is useful to him in a variety of ways. It is to a large extent by means of his tail that he makes known either to a human being, or to another dog, the state of his feelings and his sentiments with regard to any particular subject. Here are two examples in proof of what I say.

First example. If you are doing anything or saying

anything to give pleasure to a dog, he wags his tail—that is as much to say :

“ What you are doing or saying gives me much delight. Keep it up, keep on at it, in the same way that I keep on wagging this tail of mine.”

Second example. A pointer in the field stands at a bird ; he stands as steady as a statue, and a deal more naturally than many statues I could name. There isn’t a movement in the body, the tail is as straight as a rush. He is speaking to you with that tail.

“ Come quietly up,” he says ; “ here is a bird ; make no more noise than I am now making with my tail ; be steady as my tail is steady ; hold as straight, and you’ll have the bird.”

When swimming in the water, a Newfoundland dog invariably makes use of his tail as a rudder when he wishes to go to starboard or port.

When coursing, a greyhound does precisely the same thing.

A dog uses his tail as a flag of defiance. If two dogs meet on the street with tails erect and motionless, there will be a fight.

If both dogs are wagging their tails, they are merely saying, “ Good morning,” or “ Have you had your dinner yet ? ”

If two dogs meet, and one lowers his tail, the other lets him pass on, merely saying, by way of caution :

“ That is right. Always lower your tail in a respectful manner when you meet me, and I may let you live ever so long yet.”

The immense bushy tail of the Highland collie is used as a protection against cold, when the animal is on the hill-side or lying among the snow. He then simply curls himself up into a knot, and puts his tail over his face, and thus defies the weather.

It may be new to some of my readers to know that at dog shows the judges, in awarding the prizes, always take into consideration the carriage and shape of the tails of the specimens that are led out before them. Some breeds of dogs are graciously permitted and even

encouraged to curl their tails—pugs for example. On the other hand, a St. Bernard or mastiff that twirled his tail over his rump would at once be ordered out of the ring.

Judges, then, and writers on dogs insist upon the following tail-characteristics, which, non-sensical though they may seem to many, there really is something in after all :—

1. Hounds including stag or foxhounds, bloodhounds and harriers, shall carry their tails gaily, and shall be permitted to have rough hair at the lower side, but this must not approach to the appearance of a flag or brush. Nor shall they, on pain of excommunication from the show-ring, curl said tails.

2. A St. Bernard, a Newfoundland, or collie shall not carry his tail gaily, but downwards and backwards with a graceful sweep.

3. The German banger-hound, or Dachshund, shall carry his tail after the shape and fashion of the village pump, with a kind of pot-hook bend near the lower end thereof.

4. Fox terriers and most spaniels may enter the ring with their tails docked according to regulation pattern.

5. A Newfoundland or mastiff who shall enter the ring with even one joint of his tail absent, shall forfeit all right to win a prize.

6. A greyhound shall have a tail like a rat.

7. A deerhound may have the end of his tail slightly ringed.

8. The bulldog may have his tail somewhat crooked, but shall carry it downwards. On no account shall he raise it above the level of his back.

9. The Skye terrier shall not have too long a tail, nor may he be allowed to carry it gaily, but straight behind him.

10. The Scotch terrier shall wear a short tail roughly fringed, length about seven inches, with a slight bend, and he may on occasion carry it gaily.

11. The English terrier shall wear a fine and taper tail, and must not raise it above the horizontal.

12. The Irish terrier shall carry his tail invariably docked; there must be neither fringe nor feather thereon. Nor shall the Irish terrier be permitted to curl his tail.

N.B.—It would seem from reading the above that the Irish terrier is somewhat hardly dealt with. Nevertheless, such are the law and rules of the show-ring, and probably the liberty of even an Irish dog needs *cur-tailing*.

But to the pug dog is granted the largest amount of freedom as regards the carriage of tail; for not only is this consequential little animal permitted to carry his tail gaily, but he may curl it twice or even three times, into a little ball, in fact. Only the female dog is advised to carry hers on the left side of the spine, the male his upon the right. But this is not always insisted on.

So tightly is a well-bred pug's tail curled, that your genuine dog-fancier would imagine the world was coming to an end if he saw him letting it down. And yet I have seen a champion-bred pug untwist his tail, and clap it between his legs as in mortal terror; he was running away from a peacock.

Cattle use their tails chiefly, I think, as fly-dispersers, for they are very tender in the hide, and object to have insect eggs laid therein. Sometimes, on very hot days in summer, one cow says to another, "Come, let us run away from these teasing insects." And the other cows all reply, "Come on, then." Then they all cock their tails straight up in the air, and gallop in a body to the other end of the field, sometimes kicking with their hind legs and crying, "Boh!" It is very funny to see them.

When the water-buffaloes in India are tired swishing their tails about, and the mosquitoes won't take the hint, they go and wallow in a pond. When done wallowing, they lie down on their sides on the grass and go to sleep, and the crows all come down out of the banian trees and hop about on them, and eat the flies and things. The water-buffaloes of India are very wise. So are the crows.

Fishes use their tails in the water and birds in the air as rudders.

Fishes and cetaceans also use their tails as a means of

propulsion ; sometimes also as a weapon of defence. A friend of mine once found himself very high up in the air with nothing to hold on to. He had been sent up on a voyage of discovery by the tail of a whale.

The kangaroos use their tails as vaulting-poles.

When a salmon wants to jump over a weir, he takes his tail in his mouth. Next instant he lets go, straightens out, and over he goes like half-a-yard of whalebone.

The ornithorynchus, like the Scotch collie, uses its tail to keep its face warm when it curls up ; so does my old friend the Arctic fox.

Many birds hold their tails aloft by way of defiance to other birds.

"Defence, not defiance," is the motto of many animals who wear tails, such as the scaly anteaters.

I'm not quite sure about beavers' tails ; I believe they do a bit of plastering with them, but I don't think they carry the mortar.

Some lizards have enormous tails, but I think they must be an inconvenience. I have seen many monster lizards in the bush in Africa, but most of them had lost pieces off their tails, and some of them looked quite disreputable in consequence.

The tails of many monkeys are only made for ornament, but others, such as the spider monkeys, can catch branches with their tails, and swing therefrom. This sight must be very galling to those monkeys who can't swing like that.

The hedgehog hasn't a tail, and says he doesn't want one.

Neither the rhea nor kiri-kiri has a tail, but get on very well without one.

On the other hand, some animals seem to be all tail, the common garden worm for example. The arrangement seems to be a handy one, for the animal can go either way without troubling himself to turn round.

By-the-bye, as I was passing down the path that leads through my lawn, the other day, I saw an enormously large earth worm coming rapidly up out of his hole. I stooped down to pick him up, meaning to give him a

friendly help on to the lawn, for fear of his being trampled on. Instead of drawing back into his hole, as worms generally do, he continued to come up.

"Out of my way, sir, please," he seemed to say, "I'm in a fearful hurry."

As soon as he was all out, I found that a horrid creepie-creepie, namely, a larva of the disgusting beetle called the "Devil's Coach-horse," was fast to the worm's tail, and had actually eaten the end of it off. The larva was more than an inch long, with a very large head, and powerful cutting mandibles. It turned fiercely on the twig with which I knocked it off from the worm's tail, and bit at that. Then I put it in spirits of wine, and it died drunk. So even earth worms have their sorrows.

Were I not afraid of wearing out the reader's patience, I could tell some queer anecdotes about monkeys' tails. I am afraid; so there is an end to it. But this I must remark: Animals with long tails are not always conscious as to where those tails are, or what they may be doing, while the mind of the owner is otherwise engaged. I account for that in this way. The spinal marrow does not penetrate very far into the tail, only down two or three of the vertebræ, and the organ is not so well supplied with nerves as it might be.

Examples:—A monkey is perched aloft eating a nut; it has quite forgotten that its long tail is hanging down loose, until another monkey spies it and makes a bell-rope of it, or draws it over a beam and goes in for calisthenics. I had a very savage Dandie Dinmont, that when it had nothing else to quarrel with, used to make war on its own tail because it wagged, and often bit it till it bled, then howled and bit it again.

A dog—a big one—will often stand so close to the fire that he gets his tail singed and burned. Then he jumps and looks inquiringly round.

In fact, tails require constant looking after to keep them out of mischief.

Now, there is my big Newfoundland, "Hurricane Bob;" well, his tail is always getting him into hot water. Only yesterday he came marching solemnly out

of the dairy. His great fringe of a tail was dripping with cream ; he had all unconsciously wagged it across a basin of milk. In the evening he marched into the room where we were having tea. He lay down under the table. If he had stayed there it would have been all right. But a lady he loves came in, and "Hurricane Bob" must rush to meet her and wag his great tail as a matter of course. Down went two blue china cups and the cream-jug.

"Oh ! my beautiful cups !" cried my wife.

I opened the door to give my favourite speedy exit. He cast one half-sorrowful, half-angry glance at his tail.

"The second scrape you've got me into to-day," he appeared to say. "Will you never learn to keep quiet and still ?"

Then, holding the offending member low down between his legs, as if to make sure it would do no more mischief, he trotted away out to his kennel in grief.

I have several times been shipmates with rats, and know nearly all about the tricks and manners of these gentry that I care to. One thing I know is that they make a good use of their tails in a foraging way, for I have seen them dip these caudal appendages into a milk-jug, or among beer or grease that they could not otherwise reach, then quietly sit down and lick them dry.

Cats, I believe, are very proud of their tails, and, like dogs, cock them in defiance at an advancing foe. But a cat does not wag its tail when pleased, but when angry or excited.

A good old cat of mine lately shuffled off his mortal coil. A most disreputable-looking beast he was as ever you beheld. Bold, black, and fierce to all but his own friends, his ears in ribbons, and his head and body scarred.

Yorick was his name. Alas ! poor Yorick ! A dog-cart ran him down, and so severed his tail that it had to be amputated close to the root. Yorick was able to be about as usual in a day or two. Then he found his tail in the ashpit, and brought it and sat down by the back kitchen door and mourned over it. This he did for days.

No one had the heart to take that tail away from him. At last he took it away and buried it. Perhaps it was time. But the fun of the thing is this, he used to scrape it up again, and sit and sing to it. I suppose he sang—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind."

I had a noble fellow of a dog of the great Dane or boarhound breed, taller than a mastiff, and as lithe and graceful as a greyhound. Slate-grey in colour, even his little twinkling eyes were slate-grey. Although a terrible dog to look at, and a caution to tramps, he was the quintessence of good nature. Too much so, for it defied him to keep his enormous tail still a moment if you talked to or looked at him. The consequence was that the tail was constantly bleeding at the tip, from being lashed about against whatever happened to be next to it.

As the tail would not heal, it was determined to cut off a joint, make a scientific flap, dress it and let it heal. This was good enough in theory. Practice proved the operation was unavailing. Prince soon switched off the dressing. In two weeks more another operation was performed, and now a bag was made for the tail, and a whole suit of leather and rope harness to keep it on. The bottom of the bag was filled with soft tow, and the dog was tethered in a field, so that it was impossible for him to knock his tail against anything. The harness was of no avail. Put it on in any way we pleased, and rope him all over, with an iron muzzle on besides, Prince had wriggled clear before morning, and was wagging his bleeding tail as merrily as ever.

I would have backed that dog against the Davenport Brothers for the rope trick.

As a last resource, and at a suggestion of my henchman, we fastened a garden syringe on Prince. It was nearly a yard long, and the tail just fitted into it. Prince wore this garden syringe for weeks, and the point of the tail became nearly healed. But the syringe cut the root of the tail, and had at last to be abandoned.

However, it was a sight to see the great dog marching

solemnly along the street, with a yard of pewter piping sticking straight out behind him. He often hit people on the shins with it and made them jump, he wagged it across school-children and they fell on their backs, he wagged it at windows and glass flew in splinters.

People used to look at him and smile aloud, and to this day he is known in our little village as "the dog with the iron tail."

Poor dear Prince! the responsibility of that tail was almost too much for him!

I parted with Prince at last to a gentleman who said he felt certain he could cure him.

Well, he did. But the cure was a very radical one, for he cut the tail off close by the root, and when I next saw Prince, he was like Tam O'Shanter's good mare Meg—

"The fient a tail *he* had to shake."

"Talking of tails," said the engineer, "I once had a dog"—

"Hurrah!" we shouted, "the story of a dog with a tail."

"No, gentlemen, but the story of a dog without a tail. Listen."

CHAPTER XII.

WAGGA-WAGGA.

MY friends often send me hampers. I do not object to this, because they often contain what is nice, and sometimes what is very curious. Wagga-Wagga came to me in a hamper. Wagga-Wagga is still alive and well, and may be seen any day running about the streets as independent as a prince.

When the hamper in question came, then, I hastened to undo the fastenings, when, on opening the lid, lo ! and behold, Wagga-Wagga.

The first thing that occurred to me was that the doggie was wonderfully small ; the second thing that occurred to me was that it was desperately wicked. *N.B.*—This occurred to me while the animal was holding on to my thumb, very much to his own satisfaction, by his front teeth. Having refreshed himself in this fashion, he condescended to let me put him on the table for further investigation. In size he is capable of insertion, head foremost, into a pint pot. Weight, four pounds to a grain. Colour, black, with tan points. Coat, rather long, and feather as hard as hair-pins. Head, of the cocoanut fashion, and feathered like the body. Eyes large and round, and showing a good bit of the bull, and a large spice of the devil. Of tail he hasn't a vestige, so there can't be a morsel of controversy on that head. He is pretty straight on his pins, but roaches his back like a cat doing an attitude of defiance. A collie dog gave him two lines of his mind last week, and he now roaches his back much more. I baptized him Wagga-Wagga on the spot, because he hasn't a tail to wag.

The prevailing disposition of Wagga-Wagga's mind is that of morosity, combined with bad temper. There is nothing on four legs that he won't fly at, and nothing

on two either; so, instead of spending the day in the garden, he spends it out on the highway, fighting with the school children, and attacking other dogs. From these latter he gets, on an average, three thrashings a day. Three thrashings a day don't make the slightest impression on Wagga-Wagga, but the fun of the thing is that when a big dog makes up his mind to thrash Wagga-Wagga he has to lie down to do it, and catch him between his fore-paws as he would a biscuit. Provoked beyond measure the other day, my St. Bernard lay down to thrash Wagga-Wagga; half an hour afterwards, the St. Bernard entered the room where I was sitting and said, "Master, will you kindly remove this little *impediment* from my nose? It obstructs my breathing." The little *impediment* was Wagga-Wagga.

But I am convinced of one thing—viz., that it is the want of a tail, that forms the clouding sorrow of Wagga-Wagga's existence. I have no doubt that it was when he found that every other dog except himself possessed an appendage of this sort, that *he* alone was deprived by nature of caudacity, that his temper got soured, and he fled to the wilderness of Cairney Mount,* and tried to hide his depravement and sorrow among the blooming heather. If you want to offend Wagga for a week, you've only to tell him to "catch his tail." His deformity, too, is "spotted" at a glance by every dog he meets. A dog that would otherwise have trotted quietly past, suddenly stops and stares, and eyeing Wagga impertinently, "Why," he cries, "you are a fright! However, did your master let you come out like that?" "Bother you!" growls Wagga-Wagga, and goes at him, and then there's a row on the road; and I don't wonder in the least at the St. Bernard getting his nose bitten, for he is always chaffing Wagga-Wagga on the sore subject, in a nasty, dry, sarcastic way, every time he meets him. For instance, he will stretch his neck out, and take an earnest look for the absent member, and then say, "No signs yet, Waggie, eh?" or, "Well it is

* The name of the hill where Wagga was first found unning wild.—G. S.

curious, after all, old boy ; ” and Waggie may reply, “ Can’t you leave a fellow’s tai— ” and then stops short.

“ Let a fellow’s tail alone,” laughs the St. Bernard, “ out with it, Waggie. Oh lor ! Oh lor ! ” and then the big dog hums in a low key the song of “ Bo-peep,” and when he comes to the sheep bringing their tails behind them, he gives a sigh, and adds, “ It’s more’n ever you’ll do, Wag.” Now this would try the temper of any dog. However, I thought of a plan to mitigate in some measure the affliction of this Scotch terrier. I got him a squirrel’s tail, and fastened it on with wire, and for the whole week that he wore it, I don’t think there was a prouder dog in Christendom. But the kittens stole poor Waggie’s tail, and plunged him once more into the deepest grief.

“ Thank you, Douglas,” said Capt. Crisp.

“ And that reminds me,” said the mate, “ I had a dog once, and his name was Wasp.”

“ Trot him out,” we cried.

“ Here goes then, gentlemen.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT SKYE TERRIER—A BURLESQUE

“ **H**E’S a good bred ‘un, sir.” This is the somewhat unclassical English with which Wasp’s Yorkshire master introduced the puppy to me as he consigned it to my care, in return for which I crossed his hand five times with yellow gold. “ And,” he added, “ he’s a game ‘un besides.”

I knew the former of these statements was quite correct from young Wasp’s pedigree, and of the latter I was so convinced, before a week was over, that I consented to sell him to a parson for the same money I gave for him—and glad enough to get rid of him even then.

At this time the youthful Wasp was a mere bundle of black fluff, with wicked blue eyes, and flashing teeth of unusually piercing properties. He dwelt in a distant corner of the parson's kitchen, in a little square basket or creel, and a servant was told off to attend upon him; and, indeed, that servant had about enough to do. Wasp seemed to know that Annie was his own particular "slavey," and insisted on her being constantly within hail of him. If she dared to go upstairs, or even to attend the door-bell, Wasp let all the house hear of it, and the poor good-natured girl was glad to run back for peace's sake. Another thing he insisted on was being conveyed, basket and all, to Annie's bedroom when she retired for the night. He also intimated to her that he preferred eating the first of his breakfasts at three o'clock every morning sharp, upon pain of waking the parson; his second at four, third at five, and so on until further notice. I was sorry for Annie.

From the back of his little basket, where he had formed a fortress, garrisoned by Wasp himself, and provisioned with bones, boots, and slippers enough to stand a siege of any length of time, he used to be always making raids and forays on something. Even at this early age the whole aim of his existence seemed to be doing mischief. If he wasn't tearing Annie's Sunday boots, it was because he was dissecting the footstool; footstool failing, it was the cat. The poor cat hadn't a dog's life with him. He didn't mind pussy's claws a bit; he had a way of his own of backing "stern on" to her which defied her and saved his eyes. When close up he would seize her by the paw, and shake it till she screamed with pain. I was sorry for the cat.

If you lifted Wasp up in your arms to have a look at him, he flashed his alabaster teeth in your face one moment, and fleshed them in your nose the next. He never looked you straight in the face, but aslant, from the corners of his wicked wee eyes.

In course of time—not Pollok's—Wasp's black puppy-hair fell off, and discovered underneath the most beautiful silvery-blue coat ever you saw in your life; but his puppy

manners did not mend in the least. In his case the puppy was the father of the dog, and if anything the son was worse than the father.

Talk of growing, oh! he did grow: not to the height—don't make any mistake, please; Wasp calculated he was plenty high enough already—but to the length, if you like. And every day when I went down to see him, Annie would innocently ask me—

“ See any odds on him this morning, doctor? ”

“ Well, Annie,” I would say, “ he really does seem to get a little longer about every second day.”

“ Lor! yes, sir, he do grow,” Annie would reply—“ specially when I puts him before the fire awhile.”

Indeed, Annie assured me she could see him grow, and that the little blanket with which she covered him of a night would never fit in the morning, so that she had to keep putting pieces to it.

As he got older, Wasp used to make a flying visit upstairs to see the parson, but generally came flying down again; for the parson wasn't blessed with the best of tempers, anyhow. Quickly as he returned, Wasp was never down in time to avoid a kick from the clergyman's boot, for the simple reason that when Wasp's fore-feet were at the kitchen door, his hind-quarters were never much more than half-way downstairs.

N.B.—I forgot to say that this story may be taken with a grain of salt, if not found spicy enough to the taste.

There was a stove-pipe that lay in a back room; the pipe was about two yards long, more or less. Wasp used to amuse himself by running in at one end of it and out at the other. Well, one day he was amusing himself in this sort of way, when just as he entered one end for the second time, what should he perceive but the hind-quarters of a pure-bred Skye just disappearing at the other. (You will please to remember that the stove-pipe was two yards long, *more or less*.) Day after day Wasp set himself to pursue this phantom Skye, through the pipe and through the pipe, for Wasp couldn't for the life of him make out why the animal always managed to

keep just a *little* way ahead of him. Still he was happy to think that day after day he was gaining on his foe, so he kept the pot a-boiling. And one day, to his intense joy, he actually caught the phantom by the tail—in the pipe. Joy, did I say? I ought to have said sorrow, for the tail was his own; but, being a game 'un, he wouldn't give in, but hung on like grim death until the plumber came and split the pipe and relieved him. (Don't forget the length of the pipe, please.) Even after he *was* clear, he spun round and round like a St. Catherine's wheel, until he had to give in from sheer exhaustion. Yes, he was a long dog.

And it came to pass, or was always coming to pass, that he grew and he grew, and he grew, and the more he grew the longer and thicker his hair grew, till, when he had grown his full length—and I shouldn't like to say how long that was—you couldn't have told which was his head and which was his tail till he barked; and even Annie confessed that she frequently placed his dish down at the wrong end of him. It was funny. If you take half-a-dozen goat-skins and roll them separately, in cylinders, with the hairy side out, and place them end to end on the floor, you will have about as good an idea of Wasp's shape and appearance as any I can think about. You know those circular sweeping-machines with which they clean the mud off the country roads? Well, Wasp would have done excellently well as the roller of one of those; and, indeed, he just looked like one of them—especially when he was returning from a walk on a muddy morning. It was funny, too, that any time he was particularly wet and dirty he always came to the front door, and made it a point of duty always to visit the drawing-room, to have a roll on the carpet previously to being kicked downstairs.

Getting kicked downstairs was Wasp's usual method of going below. I believe he came at last to prefer it—it saved time.

Wasp's virtues as a house dog were of a very high order: he always barked at the postman, to begin with; he robbed the milkman and the butcher, and bit a half-

pound piece out of the baker's leg. No policeman was safe who dared to live within a hundred yards of him. One day he caught one of the servants of the gas company stooping down taking the state of the meter. This man departed in a very great hurry, to buy sticking-plaster and visit his tailor.

I lost sight of Wasp for about six months. At the end of that time I paid the parson a visit. When I enquired after my longitudinal friend, that clergyman looked very grave indeed. He did not answer me immediately, but took two or three vigorous draws at his meerschaum, allowing the smoke to curl upwards towards the roof of his study, and following it thoughtfully with his eyes; then he slowly rose, and extracted a long sheet of blue foolscap from his desk, and I imagined he was going to read me a sermon or something.

"Ahem!" said the parson. "I'll read you one or two casual items of Wasp's bill, and then you can judge for yourself how he is getting on."

WASP'S LITTLE BILL.

To three pairs of slippers, @ 10s.	£1 10 0
Tearing surplice and gown	0 15 0
Demolishing a flowerpot-stand	1 5 0
Ditto hardware	0 10 6
Killing fowls (minus salvage)	0 10 0
Killing a neighbour's cat	1 1 0
New Sunday's bonnet for Annie	0 15 0
Pair of Sunday's boots for Annie	0 12 0
New muff for Annie	0 7 6
Sundries for Annie	0 5 6
Solatium to a father for his bitten brat	2 2 0
License for Wasp	0 5 0
 Total	<hr/> £9 18 6 <hr/>

'There is no mistake about it—

Wasp was a "well bred 'un and a game 'un." At the same time, I was sorry for the parson.

"Thank you mate," said the Captain. "And now, boys," he added, "I'm going to bed to dream about that Skye terrier."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOCTOR SPINS AGAIN—OUR MAD SURGEON.

WISEMAN he was called—Assistant-Surgeon Wiseman, which, it must be confessed, is a strange name for a madman. But, although he was pronounced mad by more people than one, during what I may term his illness, poor Fred was just as sane as those who sent him to hospital; however, he was afflicted with one of the strangest nervous diseases I ever remember seeing. I myself was then “surgeon’s mate,” as the men somewhat irreverently termed me, of the frigate “Narwhal”; and Fred, who had been loafing around Cape Town, doing a two months’ spell of leave, was the other. It wasn’t leave quite, however; the truth is, Fred had been sent out as supernumerary in the old “Valorous,” to join us; we being cruising up the ’Bique, Fred thought he couldn’t do better than enjoy himself till we came. Now, at the best of times, a sailor’s idea of enjoyment on shore does not form the best tonic for his constitution; and Fred, instead of roaming about among the beautiful mountains and defying the snakes, or going out into the bush, gun in hand, spent too much of his time at hotels and “hops;” and the Cape lassies *can* dance, too. By Jingo! they do take it out of you! Fred told me, long after he was better, that he hadn’t been a month at the Cape until he felt his nerves going; so, being always a moderate smoker, he now became a furious one. As a rule, Cape Town tobacco is harsh and vile, but if he had stuck to the ’baccy alone it wouldn’t have been so bad; but, being a little weakened with his gentle dissipation, and consequently going up the steep streets making him pant, the doctor took it into his head he was asthmatical, and so took to mixing his smoking mixture with stramonium. The effect of this was to make him worse.

"And, by gum," he said, describing his state to me, "I was so confoundedly nervous I didn't know what to do, and I couldn't keep quiet; I was like a fly among treacle, the more I kicked the deeper I sank. And sometimes I would give up smoking for a whole day, then I felt so peevish and cross I wanted to quarrel with everybody, break lamps, and pitch stones through the church windows. No wonder my beautiful Malay girl told me I was 'jus' like one dam great racoon.'"

Fred was a little fellow, with a somewhat comical face; and when in health would keep the table in roars for hours at a spell.

Well, one day my friend got word that his ship had arrived at Symon's Bay, so there was nothing for it but mount the waggon one fine morning, and be off to join her.

Fred's illness, let me tell you, was a species of St. Vitus's dance; he had no power, when excited, over the motions of his muscles.

His reporting himself to the commander was rather funny; he shuffled up to him, gave a scrape with one leg, and touched his hat, but it was for all the world like "taking a sight."* "Co-co-come on board, sir," said Fred. "Thank you," said the commander, looking rather stern, and, turning on his heel, he walked away. Now, our commander was very ugly, and knew it, and he had one eye that looked in towards his nose. No sooner had he turned his back than poor Fred struck an involuntary attitude, and, when the commander wheeled again, there was Fred taking a sight at him, making monkey mouths, and with both his eyes turned in towards his nose, while the officers all around were choking with the laugh they daren't indulge in.

Our commander wasn't the best tempered man in the world, but had he been so he could hardly have been expected to stand an insult like this, on her Majesty's quarter-deck, and before all the officers.

* "Taking a sight." Sailor lingo for that action in which you place the point of the thumb to the point of the nose and spread out the fingers.—G. S.

"Thunder!" he roared, confronting the little doctor, "What do you mean, sir?"

"I really co-co-couldn't help it, sir," said Fred, looking ridiculously solemn all at once."

"Go instantly down below under arrest, sir."

"Ay! ay! sir," said Fred; but as he hurried off, and just as he was disappearing down the companion ladder, he took another sight, and pulled another face, that seemed almost to send the soul out of the ugly commander.

In the wardroom Fred met the surgeon, a fussy wee Irishman, five feet two, with a frock coat a mile too long in the waist for him, pug-nosed and pock-marked, but terribly proud for his inches. Not having heard the row on deck, he stepped briskly forward and held out his hand to welcome the new assistant. I suppose Fred meant to salute, and would have completed this act of courtesy had his fingers not spread themselves out just as his thumb was opposite his nose, and this made it look so confoundedly like taking a sight, you know. "Drunk, by Jove!" said the surgeon, wheeling in wrath, and walking away. When he turned again, lo! and behold! the unfortunate Fred apparently holding up his nose with one finger to make it a snub, bobing his head up and down as if taking stock of the wee man's height, and seemingly bursting with merriment.

The poor little doctor couldn't speak with passion; he could but seize his cap, and rush on deck to report the insolent and insubordinate conduct of his junior.

Hardly had the doctor done talking with the commander, than up rushes the marine officer, and gave the salute; "he had been twenty years in the service, and had never been so insulted before, &c., &c."

"Confound him!" cried the commander, "he's insulting all hands."

"He's drunk," said the doctor.

"He's a fool," said the marine officer.

"He's mad, *mad, MAD!*" roared the commander; and I'll be hanged if I sail with a madman. I'll clap the fellow in irons at once, see if I don't."

And that was how poor Fred really spent his first and only night on board the frigate "Narwhal." Next day he was brought before the captain, a tall, good-looking, gentlemanly man, between whom and the commander there was but little love lost.

And now, when first brought up, though looking pale and nervous, Fred seemed perfectly sane.

"Do you drink?" said the captain mildly.

"No, sir," said Fred, "I smoke when I can ge-ge-get the chit-chit-chit-chance."

It was all right with Fred as long as he addressed the captain; but no sooner did his eyes rest on the commander than in went his optics towards his nose, and he became convulsed in a moment; and when he turned and saw the wee doctor, he seemed to go off in quite a fit of suppressed merriment, and I really think that on the whole the captain thought it good fun.

"I'd send him to hospital," said the captain quietly.

"I'd send him to the devil!" muttered the commander savagely.

But Fred didn't go to the devil just then; and, though he is dead, I don't think he is there now. He went to the hospital, however, and soon got well; but the last thing the commander saw, as he peeped over the bulwarks as the boat shoved off, was little Fred sitting in the stern-sheets, with both his eyes turned in towards his nose, making monkey mouths and taking vicious sights at him.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE MORE YARN FROM THE JOLLY TAPSTERS.

PTOSIS.

"**P**TOSIS?" I think I hear you query. "What a strange title to choose for a tale! What the dickens, or what the deuce is it at all?"

And you use the word "dickens" or the word "deuce" according to the comparative amount of your morality. Well, I didn't choose the title. It chose itself—it came, as it were, as all good names and titles do.

The word Ptosis, then, the doctor here tells me, is derived from the Greek $\pi\tau\beta\omega$, to fall, and is applied by the medicine men to a curious affection of the upper eyelid, or rather of the nerve that supplies it; for this latter, failing in the performance of its duty, allows the lid to drop as if the owner were only just about half-awake. That's Ptosis. Now do you see? Of course you do, and you will at once jump to the conclusion that the subject of my present moral yarn, namely, my good friend Findlay, was afflicted with this ailment. You are right. Only, mark me, the symptoms in his case were what I might call circumbended; for it wasn't a falling down of the upper eyelid that he suffered from, but a morbid elevation of the lower one. It was a kind of Irish Ptosis. Don't smile, please; you'll be sorry for Findlay ere my tale is finished. Now bear this in mind, that wicked lower eyelid of Findlay's wasn't always elevated, any more than Findlay was himself. It would have been far better for the unhappy man if it had been glued or gummed up, and always kept in the same position; but, on the contrary, at most times the eyelid was like anybody else's, stationary and steady enough, and

all at once it would give one little jump upwards, then fall back again into its place, and there would be an end of it for the time being.* Ah ! yes, for the time being, but, unfortunately for Findlay, in that little moment of time, in the ghost of a second, the mischief was done, and my poor friend in many instances found himself in a scrape.

Now, had friend Findlay been a great big lump of a Findlay, with shoulder of mutton fists, a fighting heart, science, and all that sort of thing, it would have been an easy matter to have got out of the scrapes which his winking eye—girls called it his wicked eye—got him into. But he wasn't, he was a mite of a man ; as to his hand, he wore six and three-quarters ; as to a fighting heart, bless you, our friend Findlay would have run a mile any day rather than fight a minute ; and yet a better-hearted little soul than Findlay never entered the doors of the “Jolly Tapsters.” He was honest and industrious, temperate though pimply-faced, beardless and virtuous. His motto was, like the Yankee's,

“ Early to bed, and early to rise,
Never get tight, and advertise.”

Tight ! no. I defy the whole of Twintleton to say they ever saw Findlay tight. Just a *leetle* elevated sometimes, you might say, and had he held his tongue even then nobody would have been a bit the wiser ; but whenever Findlay got “just a wee drap in his ee,” he would persist in singing, in a dulcet but half-choked voice, the melting chorus of—

“ 'Tis but a little faded flower.”

Whenever you heard Findlay at this you might take your oath he was happy.

Again, to show you what a thoroughly good little soul Findlay was, I may tell you that he never smoked, and that his pet oath was “Jumping Moses !”

* This spasmodic twitching of the lower eyelid, I may mention seriously, is a not uncommon accompaniment of dyspepsia in people of the nervous temperament.

Findlay often swore by Jumping Moses that he would never smoke in *this* world. Whether or not Findlay looked forward with joy to the worship of the blessed goddess Nicotina in the other world or not I cannot say. Such was Findlay.

And I will now relate to you one or two of the scrapes that Ptosis got this poor little man into. I could relate hundreds, but I only give specimens.

I can tell you, for instance, how Findlay lost a friend. This friend and he, with a third party, were standing one day at the bar of the "Jolly Tapsters," having a quiet chat upon turf matters.

"I'll take ten to one on Gamester," says the third party, addressing Findlay's friend.

Now Findlay had, in his earlier days, been very near getting on for a jockey, and he was still considered large on all matters horsey. It was most unlucky, then, that just as the third party spoke Findlay should happen to glance at his friend, and that at the same time his wicked eye should twitch.

"On with you for a fiver!" roared his friend.

"Done with you!" cried the third party.

"Jumping Moses!" cried Findlay, but it was too late; and so, when the day came and the race was run, Findlay's friend found himself minus his money, and friend Findlay was minus a friend.

More than once, at the bar of the "Jolly Tapsters," Findlay offended people who did not know him by, as they thought, winking at them; and more than once he got into a row in consequence.

"You winked at me!" cried on irascible commercial, one evening.

"'Tis but a little fa—a—aded flower," sang Findlay.

"You winked, I say!" roared the commercial. "I consider it a piece of impertinent familiarity."

"I've got a weakness in my left eye," said Findlay.

"Blow your eye! come to the door, and I'll blacken 'em both," said the traveller.

Findlay bristled up; he was very brave indoors.

"You blacken *my* eye! Have you the faintest notion

you are talking to Findlay, sir—to fighting Findlay, sir ? Out you go—I'll show you Ben Caunt. Jumping Moses !

“I'm not going to leave my beer, though,” said Findlay, as they were both at the door. “Jumping Moses ! no.”

The honourable commercial naturally thought he would follow, and went out. Findlay didn't. He knew a trick worth a dozen of that. He coolly drank his beer, and then popped out of the *other* door, and so got out of that scrape.

But Findlay wasn't always so fortunate. One fine day, for example, he was travelling by train ; it was a market day, and the carriages were somewhat crowded, the joskin element largely predominating. Right opposite to Findlay sat a pretty country girl, and by her side her big-mouthed rustic lover. Well, during the journey Findlay looked at this pretty girl, and, as ill-luck would have it, his wicked eyelid gave a twitch.

The lover took his pipe out of his mouth, and, nodding to Findlay—

“I had my eye on yourn just then,” says he.

“Oh ! had ye ?” says Findlay, with a little laugh.

The rustic lover resumed his pipe, and said no more ; and poor Findlay thought no more would be said, and was pleased in consequence. But that lover came to the front again, and a mob of other lovers, as soon as they had left the terminal station.

“Look 'ee here, sir,” he cried, “ye beant a-going like that. Not if I knows it, I can tell ye. You would wink at my Sally, would ye? Hold my coat, mates. Give us a ring. I ain't going to stand it. Bust me if I does.”

There was no getting through that rustic ring. He made several maudlin attempts to force it, butting at it with his head down ; but he was invariably thrust rudely back and asked to stand up and be a man. Now, that was the very last thing that Findlay would have thought about. He wasn't a fool. Next day would be Sunday, and he had no wish to appear at church looking as though he had just been through a sausage machine.

“Look here, lads,” he began, trying to get a hearing.

They listened, as louts do when told to.

"I did wink at the girl, and now I'm willing to stand treat all round. I'll pay for the wink."

"Bravo!" was the chorus, as friend Findlay led the way to an adjoining inn to pay for his wink.

Findlay paid for his wink another day in quite a different fashion. This was likewise a travelling adventure, for once again did Findlay find himself sitting in front of a pretty girl; indeed, one would be inclined to think that Findlay had a partiality for pretty girls. However, cheek-by-jowl with this particular pretty girl was a by no means very pretty specimen of a mother. A most antediluvian-looking specimen she was, too, and her dress was a dark stuff gown and a merino mantle; her goods and chattels were her daughter and a huge umbrella, besides a reticule basket with Banbury cakes and a bottle of gin.

"Aha!" suddenly exclaimed this antiquated dame, poking a skinny finger towards friend Findlay. "Aha! I seed it that time. Oh! ye old good-for-nothing wagabone. *You* would wink at my precious darter, would *ye*? *You* would outrage a mother's feelings, would *ye*?"

"Really, really," stammered Findlay, "I assure you my lady, that is ma'am, I had no intention. It is only my weakness. I—I—I—Oh! Jumping Moses! I dare-say I'm in for it again."

All the rest of the journey the watchful mother kept her eye on Findlay—Findlay kept his on the ceiling—frequently muttering to herself, "Aha! *his* weakness, indeed; I'll show him *my* weakness."

As she made an application to the bottle every time she spoke, Findlay flattered himself she referred to the gin.

He was cruelly undeceived when they landed, however. The old lady undeceived him with her umbrella. Oh! didn't she lay it on with a will, too?

Poor Findlay hopped all round the station calling out, "Jumping Moses!"

"I'll give you Moses!" cried the old lady.

"Well done, old girl, give it to him!" cried the mob.

She wound up at last with one cruel dig in the ribs, which sent him sprawling on his face, and the old lady looked down upon him triumphantly.

"That's my weakness," says she. "Aha!"

Only one other example, and it happened not an hour afterwards. Friend Findlay was walking soberly along the pavement in a quiet side street, when he met a very much over-dressed gentleman with a very much over-dressed lady on his arm. I suppose Findlay looked at them: he was in a pensive, thoughtful mood, for his ribs were painful and his shoulders were stiff. He swears till this day that if upon this occasion his eyelid did twitch, he was not aware of it.

"You scoundrel!" roared the gentleman, who was French. "Vat you mean, sare? Vat you vink at my wife for?"

Findlay denied it stoutly.

"It *vas* a vink, I tell you, sare," persisted the Frenchman; "it *vas* a vink, and a sly one too—a devilish sly vink. I fight you, sare, English style."

Now here was a chance which Findlay should not have missed, for surely anybody could fight a Frenchman—English style. But I am ashamed to say that Findlay declined the combat, and—fled. He thought he had had quite enough for one day.

Now all this was terribly hard on Findlay, and no wonder that at last he made up his mind to consult a doctor.

Well, he did, not one doctor only, but a score at least, and never less than three at a time; and as he tried to obey them all at once, and swallowed oceans of medicine and pecksful of pills, it is no wonder the little man got nervous and ill. And the twitching got worse; he wouldn't look at a girl; he was almost afraid to look his own mother in the face, for fear of being accused of unfilial impertinence; and one day he actually winked at the parson in the pulpit. After this Findlay kept at home; he wouldn't go out, nor he wouldn't go anywhere. So low in spirits had he become that he asked his old landlady, with tears in his eyes, to please not

think him rude if he winked at her, and please not to give him warning, as he had nowhere else to go.

About a month after this, one dark sleety evening, a knock came to my door, and, on going myself to open it,

"Oh! please do come quick," says Findlay's old landlady, "which my lodger have been and gone and bought a bottle of P—russic assid, and I know he means to do for his little self."

Things looked serious, and I went away with the old creature at once. Not empty-handed, however. She had described the bottle—a common ounce poison phial—to me, and I gave her one exactly similar, with a nice strong sleeping draught in it, and as we hurried through the sleet, I described to his landlady how she was to change the bottle while I kept Findlay talking. I have been at many a death-bed scene, but never like this one of Findlay's. You see his old woman, as he called her, had managed matters capitally; and there was I, sitting on the end of friend Findlay's bed, chewing the end of my meerschaum nearly off to stifle the laugh; and there was Findlay lying with his white night-cap on, and thinking himself on the brink of eternity, and looking as solemn as I can't tell you what; but, by George! I smile when I think of him, and I smile when I think of the start he gave when I said to him, "Have a smoke—it'll cure you of winking."

"Jumping Moses! no!" he said; "I said I never would smoke in this world, *and you'll find I won't.*"

He brought out the last five words in a voice that was really sepulchral. "Good night, then," I said; "I hope you'll sleep sound."

"Good night," he groaned; I know I shall."

* * * * *

"Hullo!" I cried next morning, bursting into Findlay's room, splitting with laughter. "What not dead yet?"

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "is it you?"

"Only me," I said; "did you think it was the evil one? And now, Findlay, have a weed; you're out of the world now, and dead, you know."

Findlay saw the trick at once that I had played him,

and, like a wise man, he lit a cigar, then lay peacefully back on the pillow and smoked and smiled, then smiled and smoked again.

Findlay's cure was slow, but complete, and he sticks to his weed now like a man, and he never winks unless he wants to.

* * * * *

After this yarn we all turned in, and slept the sleep of the good and the virtuous.

* * * * *

Every man Jack, fore and aft, 'low and aloft, has unbent his foul-weather toggery—or, in 'long-shore parlance, has cast aside his winter clothing. Furs and skins, mittens and gloves are stowed away in locker and sea-chest. Even the useful sou'-wester, with its broad flap aft, has given place to the jaunty hat or the saucy glengarry, and white ducks and jackets of blue are all the rage; for we have left far behind us the Sea of Ice, the sea of mystery and adventure, and a fair wind has speeded us into a warmer and more genial clime. Rippling waves are all around us, sparkling brightly in a summer's sun, the decks are as white as the snows we have left, and the good ship is clad in canvas from deck to truck, and looks as gay as a maiden on her marriage morning. And she swings along, dipping and coquetting and toying with the billows, as if keeping time to the song of yonder group of merry sailors, that sit in the lea of the fox'le, discussing in comfort their forenoon grog, with a

“ Hey ! my lads, and a ho ! my men,
For we are homeward bo-o-ound,
For a we-e-e are homeward bound,”

dipping to leeward with the “ Hey !” swinging to starboard with the “ Ho !” and raising her bows with the “ bo-o-ound,” till her jib points right to the zenith. Don't tell me that a ship isn't a thing of life, because I'd never believe you.

The great Newfoundland is basking in the sunshine, with his red ribbon of a tongue lolling over his teeth. He sniffs the land, and land it is, and not far off either, the

beetling green-topped cliffs of Ultima Thule. I wonder what that dog is thinking of, as he eyes with superstitious suspicion the well-battered telescope that the skipper hugs under his arm, as he passes and repasses him. The poor animal hates that glass now more than a sixty-pounder Armstrong. The truth is, we induced him to take a keek through it this morning at the land. Good heavens ! he saw a cow switching her tail, and real green grass under her, and a real cottage not far off, and real ragged children making garlands of seaweed in front thereof ; besides a girl with a creel of peats, and an old witch smoking a pipe, and all as large as life, and all in that little bit of a tube ! The dog made one wild spring backwards, left the doctor and I sprawling on the deck, and stood afar and barked at us. Were we wizards, he wanted to know, or what ? Such conduct beat cock-fighting ; it beat anything he had seen on the Lone Lorne Land. And so on and so forth, and I'll give odds the poor dog remembered that spy-glass to his dying day.

* * * * *

Haul down the blue flag, and clew sails. The Wanderoo is safe in harbour, and we are home again. We have had many strange and stirring adventures, and seen a few "ferlies," though we haven't seen the Pole. But as my old gardener says, "No more hasn't nobody else, sir."

THE END.

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